University of Huddersfield Repository

Naveed, Maryam

The Impact of Primary Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge and Autonomy on the Teaching of Early Reading

Original Citation

Naveed, Maryam (2016) The Impact of Primary Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge and Autonomy on the Teaching of Early Reading. Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield.

This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/34425/

The impact of primary teachers' pedagogical knowledge and autonomy on the teaching of early reading

Maryam Naveed

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

The University of Huddersfield

November 2016

Acknowledgement

I first of all would like to thank my supervisors Kevin Orr and Jonathan Glazzard for their inspiring support, guidance and above all their patience throughout this journey.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my parents and siblings who always prayed for my success and encouraged me.

Finally, and above all I am thankful to my husband Naveed and our children Abubakar, Umar and Fatima for their love. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Abstract

There has been considerable controversy over the effective approach to teach early reading known as phonics versus whole language. However, synthetic phonics as prime method emerged from a review (Rose, 2006a) of the teaching of early reading in England. The Coalition government declared the phonics screening test at the end of Year 1. In order to raise the standard in literacy the new national curriculum (2013) has been introduced with more high expectations for every year group. The government has also announced its obligation to give more freedom to schools and teachers to tailoring the curriculum according to children's needs. This change in policy and accountability requirements has brought attention towards teachers who are the agents of change. There is a need to explore teachers' perceptions about several reading approaches and the impact of change on their practices.

This study was conducted after the implementation of the new national curriculum (DfE, 2013), in attempting to explore teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their practices in the teaching of early reading. By adopting a qualitative case study approach, 11 Early Years and Key Stage 1 teachers' perceptions were explored through semi-structured interviews. In addition, observations of their classes were taken into consideration. Thematic analysis of data concluded that there were some inconsistencies between teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices due to their experience, education, training and the level of class they taught in. Finally, it can be argued here that there is no one single approach to teach reading. The government is trying to increase reading attainment by increasingly being prescriptive about what teachers should teach and how they should teach it. It can also be argued here that too much national assessment at every step of learning increases the level of pressure on teachers and decreases the opportunities of creating children's interest in reading.

Contents

Appendices

List of Tables

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter aims to provide an overview of the thesis. It sets out the significance of this research along with the discussion of contextual background. In addition, the intended research aims will be covered, followed by the research questions. Finally, an outline of the thesis structure and focus of each chapter will be discussed.

1.2 Reading

Reading is the fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends. It is unlikely that a child will flourish in school or life if s/he does not learn to read early and well (ERIC, 1999). It is an academic skill which supports pupils' learning across the full curriculum and it provides them with a chance to develop culturally, intellectually, socially and participate fully as a member of society. Conversely, if they do not learn to read they are effectively disenfranchised (DfE, 2013). Within the educational literature some reading experts and researchers (Browne, 1998; Glazzard & Palmer, 2015) described reading as an important tool for learning which makes a significant contribution to individual growth in relation to facing the changing demands of complex society. Goswami (2006) stated "when spoken language is represented by visual symbols, and we access meaning from decoding these symbols, we call it reading" (p. 124). While others (Graham and Kelly, 2008) concluded that "reading is the bringing together of a text to be decoded and understood and a reader who has to engage actively with both these processes" (p. 3). In spite of these simple definitions, the term has over the past decades stimulated various conceptualisations across disciplines. The act of reading is therefore not simple. There is no simple solution to the question of how to teach reading (Browne, 1998). In England and other English speaking countries controversies exist among researchers about the best possible ways in which children can learn to read and the difficulty is that there is no one conclusive method or approach.

1.3 Historical background of the reading debate

There can be little doubt that teaching of reading has been considered as one of the most contested area in relation to literacy (Wyse, 2000). In the past, several developmental theories have been put forward by researchers to inform us about the processes through which children learn to read. According to Goodman's (1967) psycholinguistic theory, the process of reading proceeds from whole to part; this assumes that meaning is not derived from the text. Rather, meaning is brought to the text. The process of learning to read is also presented by Ehri (2005), who identified four stages of reading development: the pre-alphabetic phase, in which children use visual cues in the print to read a word; the partial alphabetic phase where the reader learns the relationship between letters and sounds and they use that to insight but they are not able to 'use full complexity of sounds in words'; the full alphabetic phase in which reader becomes familiar with letters and sounds and is able to decode; the consolidated alphabetic phase in which children are able to recognise words quickly and automatically. In this phase children use their memory to read words instead of using their phonological strategies. Those who recognise the whole words instantly have reached the consolidated alphabetic stage where they not only store the words but also store letter patterns across different words (Pikulski & Chard, 2005, p. 512). Over the years arguments about the most appropriate approach to teach children to read have spilled into bitter debates and provoked considerable disagreements. At the centre of the arguments lies what Chall (1970) termed 'the great debate' (a debate between two groups of educators and researchers). One group embraced an approach which is concerned with sound-symbol correspondences (bottom-up) and other advocated the meaning-emphasis (top-down) approach. Later, this reading controversy has seen its incarnation in phonics versus whole language (further detail is given below) approaches respectively (Adams, 1994; Allington, 2002; Goodman, 1967; & Stanovich & Stanovich, 1995). The issues related to phonics and whole language are central

to the teaching and learning of reading (Chall, 1970). In Smith's (1971) view this is a "never-ending debate" which will never be resolved through research and experiments and Smith argued that it is unlikely that commentators will change their theoretical position in relation to the reading debate.

1.4 Policy context

This part of thesis will provide a critical perception on policy related to teaching of reading. An examination of the England's educational policies is useful in relation to this thesis as these policies have had a significant impact on the teaching of early reading. "The educational systems of many countries experienced rapid rates of change and innovation" (Webb et al., 2004, p. 83). Similarly, the English educational system has undergone several changes. The content of the English curriculum was published for the first time in the 1988 version of the national curriculum (DES, 1988). After ten years of the national curriculum (DES, 1988), the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) Framework (DfEE, 1998) was implemented in a drive to raise standards of literacy among 5 to 11 years olds. Since the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy Framework a number of changes have been ensued in the teaching of reading. By taking a clear position on the teaching of reading this 'ambitious reform' (National Literacy Strategy, 1998) prescribed its pedagogy of the literacy hour and crucially specified teaching methods (Flynn, 2007; Wyse, 2000; & Webb et al., 2004). The framework was a broad document with details about the content and pedagogical approaches for teaching literacy. As the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy Framework (DfEE,1998) progressed, Ofsted (2003-2004) highlighted several concerns: teachers saw the framework as a set of requirements to be ticked off; teachers focused heavily on covering the objectives of NLS instead of meeting the specific individual needs of children; the level of pupils' progress was not as high as it should have been; finally, it was recommended that there was a need of improvement in teachers' 'subject knowledge' of

literacy with a specific emphasis on phonics (Ofsted, 2003-2004, pp. 2-15). The 'Searchlights' model was at the heart of the National Literacy Strategy framework. This model was based on the assumption that children need to use four cueing systems to support reading development: phonics knowledge; grammatical knowledge; graphic knowledge; and knowledge of context in order to identify words on the page. According to Ellis & Moss (2014) "it drew haphazardly on psycholinguistic theoretical models, grounded in systematic observations of children reading in naturalistic contexts and applied in widely documented teaching tools such as 'running records' and 'miscue analysis' (p. 244).

However, in the NLS (DfEE, 1998) framework, phonics, which focuses on decoding print through blending phonemes together, rather than pronouncing the name of the letter, has been considered an effective approach for children's reading development at early stages. The framework emphasised the significance of 'analytic phonics' as an effective approach for teaching reading to early learners. Analytic phonics refers to an approach in which phonemes associated with particular graphemes are not pronounced in isolation. Children identify the common phoneme in a set of words in which each word contains the phoneme under study (Graham & Kelly, 2008, p. 32). At the time, policy makers made the claim that the emphasis on phonics in the NLS was supported by the research evidence. However, this claim has been contested (Wyse, 2000). In order to find whether the emphasis on phonics was justified Wyse (2000) critically reviewed the research evidence. This was done by reviewing a number of key areas: seminal work, teaching method evaluation, longitudinal evidence, and the DfEE review of research and related evidence (Wyse, 2000, p. 356). After reviewing several studies (Adam, 1994; Chall, 1970) which supported phonics teaching Wyse (2000) concluded that the link between prescribed phonics teaching and research was weak. He argued that much of the research evidence had been gathered in the context of struggling readers. However, children differ in their learning needs. Another deficiency with regard to the research

evidence reported by Wyse was the lack of longitudinal studies. Wyse reported that: "the research evidence supporting the explicit teaching of phonics is far from conclusive. It is very difficult to extrapolate the findings reliably and apply these directly to national educational policy" (Wyse, 2000, p. 362).

Conversely, phonics debate turned its direction and the criticism on the NLS framework came from those who were in favour of synthetic phonics. This synthetic phonics approach "teaches the child to identify the sounds represented by each letter (or letter cluster) in a word and then to blend those sounds to give the word (e.g., blending the sounds /t/a/p/ results in the word *tap*)" (Graff et al., 2009, p. 318). The debates and arguments about phonics teaching are not just among researchers and educationists. In England the debates about reading turned political. Politicians, who are not necessarily trained as educators, have, over the last two decades, introduced reforms in the educational system specifically in relation to the teaching of early reading. The Reading Reform Foundation (RRF, 2006) argued that the 'searchlights' model gave too little emphasis on phonics. They argued that it needed to be replaced with a synthetic phonics programme which emphasises the systematic teaching of phonics in the early stages. The RRF found political backing from Nick Gibb, then the shadow Minster for Schools. To support their arguments they drew their research evidence from the Clackmannanshire study in Scotland (Johnston & Watson, 2004) which demonstrated that systematic phonics instruction played a critical role in reading development (Ellis & Moss, 2014). The purpose behind giving the political reference is to indicate that the phonics debate is not only an academic and pedagogical debate, it is also political. In order to reflect on the interpretations of literacy experts and to look for ways forward the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee report: *Teaching children to read* (2005) was published and 'the Rose Review' (2006a) was one of the outcomes of this report.

4.1 The Rose review (2006)

The 'Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading' (Rose, 2006a) commissioned by the government in 2005 considered and addressed the following aspects:

> What best practice should be expected in the teaching of early reading and synthetic phonics; how this relates to the development of the birth to five framework and the development and renewal of the National Literacy Strategy Framework for teaching; what range of provision best supports children with significant literacy difficulties and enables them to catch up with their peers; money and cost issue and the leadership and management issues in schools.
>
> (Rose, 2006a, p. 7)

Rose (2006), in his report, spoke of the worries that despite improvements made overall, there were particularly urgent concerns nationally about the comparatively weak performance of the 15% of children who do not reach the target level for their age in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 and the 16% of children who do not reach it by the end of Key Stage 2 – around 85,000 and 95,000 children respectively (p. 35).

4.1.1 The 'Simple View of Reading'

In the light of such findings Rose (2006) recommended that NLS 'Searchlights' model for teaching reading in early years should be replaced by the 'Simple View of Reading' (SVR) (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) in order to separate and clarify the two components of SVR: word recognition and language comprehension (Rose, 2006a, p. 38). The 'Simple View of Reading' emphasises the importance of both word recognition and linguistic comprehension for enhancing fluency in reading. Therefore, in this model decoding is seen as the precursor to comprehension (Rose, 2006a), both skills are needed for effective reading and each skill requires a different approach to teaching in order to support its development. When Rose

(2006) adopted the 'Simple View of Reading' in his report, it was not the new concept. It was already seen as a controversial model in the educational research. Purcell-Gates (2002) had criticised the SVR due to the simplistic manner in which it is used to assess reading. Furthermore, she argued that "its emergence in educational and research circles is in my view disturbing, perplexing and ultimately dangerous" (p. 105). Purcell-Gates (2002) suggested that there is a need to do more research in word recognition processes as it is indicated from the research that the process of word recognition operates under different contexts as the 'context of the word changes' (p. 110). She recommended that the reason behind doing more research is the need for studies which can tell us not only about the required 'cognitive and linguistic skills' that learners need to read successfully, but 'how they learn those skills, in what contexts, under what conditions, within what type of interactions with whom' (Purcell-Gates, 2002, p. 15).

4.1.2 Recommendation for synthetic phonics approach

With the publication of the '*Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading*' (Rose, 2006a) systematic phonics instruction gained a central place in the reading curriculum. The rationale that Rose provided for this recommendation is as followed:

> [B]ecause the relationship between sounds and letters is more complex than in many other alphabetic languages. It is therefore crucial to teach phonic work systematically, regularly and explicitly, because children are highly unlikely to work out this relationship for themselves.
>
> (Rose, 2006a, pp.18-19)

The review called for a systematic approach to phonics in which simple alphabetic code is taught first to children before they progress on to the complex code. Based on the outcomes of the Clackmannanshire study (Johnston & Watson, 2004) the report recommended that synthetic phonics "should be the prime approach used in the teaching of early reading"

(DfES, 2006a, p. 54). Rose (2006a) put forward the idea that high quality phonics work, based on the synthetic approach, should be taught discretely and within a 'broad and rich language curriculum. The key features of the synthetic phonics approach are to teach children grapheme-phoneme correspondences, blending phonemes all through the word in order to read a word and segmenting words into their constituent phonemes for spelling. At that time schools were required to adopt programmes which matched the core criteria for a systematic synthetic phonics programme defined by the Department for Education. The criteria specified that the phonics scheme should:

- enable children to start learning phonic knowledge and skills using a systematic, synthetic programme by the age of five, with the expectation that they will be fluent readers having secured word recognition skills by the end of key stage one

- be designed for the teaching of discrete, daily sessions progressing from simple to more complex phonic knowledge and skills and covering the major grapheme/phoneme correspondences

- ensure children apply phonic knowledge and skills as their first approach to reading and spelling even if a word is not completely phonically regular

- ensure that children are taught high frequency words that do not conform completely to grapheme/phoneme correspondence rules

- provide fidelity to the teaching framework for the duration of the programme, to ensure that these irregular words are fully learnt

- ensure that as pupils move through the early stages of acquiring phonics, they are invited to practise by reading texts which are entirely decodable for them, so that they experience success and learn to rely on phonemic strategies.

(DfE, 2011b, p. 2)

The purpose of publishing the criteria was to help schools to choose a commercially produced programme, to use a new primary national strategy phonics programme or a phonic programme developed by themselves through which high-quality phonics work could be achieved. These actions from government showed (deciding the criteria for programmes) that how much importance was given to this approach. However, there were a number of researchers who questioned the effectiveness of this approach in different contexts. Rose (2006a) claimed that "synthetic phonics offers the vast majority of young children the best and most direct route to becoming skilled readers and writers" (DfE, 2006a, p. 4). The evidence behind this claim was not empirical but anecdotal and based on a small number of visits to schools. Rose wrote; "the visit provided the review with first-hand evidence of very effective teaching and learning of phonic knowledge……….focusing on the practice observed in the classroom and its supportive context, rather than debating the research, is therefore not without significance for this review" (p. 61-62). Such statement by Rose and the lack of empirical evidence presented in the report reduces the validity of Rose's recommendations. Wyse and Goswami (2008) stated that the 'phonological complexity of syllable structures, coupled with the inconsistent spelling system' in a language like English, 'mean that direct instruction at levels other than the phoneme may be required in order to become an effective reader' (later discussed in detail) (p. 693). In countries like France, Italy and Greece where syllable structure is simple synthetic phonics as an effective approach can be used for teaching of reading (Wyse & Goswami, 2008). Therefore, they concluded that due to the complexity of the English language it is implausible that the universal adoption of synthetic phonics without any 'evidence of proof of concept' will result according to the Rose's and government's expectations. However, in addition, the drive to use synthetic phonics as a primary method for teaching children to read has not been applauded by several other educators and teachers. It has been a matter of controversy among educational

researchers (Wyse & Styles, 2007; Cook, Littlefair & Brooks, 2007). According to Wyse and Styles (2007) the stress on the importance of the systematic phonics instruction for early reading is supported by the research but the Rose recommendation that early reading instruction should include synthetic phonics is not supported by the research. Another recommendation by Rose that the children under the age of five will benefit from systematic phonics is not supported by the research evidence too. Wyse and Styles (2007) argued the majority of research studies in favour of systematic phonics teaching were carried out with children age 6 and older. One more controversial issue with regard to Rose report (2006a) was the unsuitability of the one approach for every single child. As Rutter (2006) stated:

> For programmes intended to make a real difference in the long term, such as synthetic phonics, the research evaluation should be long term, and it must be recognised that subgroups (for example, children with learning difficulties) may require something different.
>
> (Rutter, 2006, cited in Wyse and Goswami, 2008, p. 692)

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Education into its 'report of the inquiry into overcoming the barriers to literacy' shed light on the notion that "literacy is more than a mechanical skill…….there is no one way to teach reading so, a single focus on systematic synthetic phonics is a false one" (2011, p. 4). The United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA, 2010) expressed its views by arguing that children are very diverse in terms of personality and in terms of what kind of linguistic and emotional expertise they bring to the classroom where they are learning how to read. Therefore, cannot be one same approach of teaching for all of them.

4.2 The primary framework for literacy and mathematics (2006b)

The renewed primary framework for literacy and mathematics was published in year 2006. The renewal of the literacy framework is underpinned by the recommendations of the Rose

Report (2006a), to place emphasis upon synthetic phonics approach. The framework identified 12 strands of learning by reflecting on the four aspects of language: speaking and listening, reading and writing. Out of the 12 strands, three are in reading, which reflects the 'Simple View of Reading' described in the Rose Review. The framework is designed for teachers to plan their literacy lessons but what is argumentative is the persistence on adopting the one approach of phonics. According to Graham and Kelly the insistence on adopting the one approach of phonics in the framework is contrary to the importance of 'teachers' professional decision making' and "the one method and one method only approach can blind teachers to the individual strengths, weaknesses and ways of learning of the children in front of them" (Graham & Kelly, 2008, p. 13).

4.3 The Schools' White Paper (DfE, 2010): 'the importance of teaching'

This strategy paper placed emphasis on the concept of teachers' autonomy in the classroom (DfE, 2010). The issue of teachers' autonomy is something that this study explored in the context of teaching of early reading in England. In order to address the role of the teacher in the education system 'the Schools' White Paper (DfE, 2010) identified the success of other countries such as South Korea and Finland where teaching profession has a highest status (DfE, 2010). The Prime Minister's words from the foreword of this paper are worth citing in this respect:

> What really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past. In the most recent OECD PISA survey in 2006 we fell from 4th in the world in the 2000 survey to 14th in science, 7th to 17th in literacy, and 8th to 24th in mathematics. The only way we can catch up, and

have the world-class schools our children deserve, is by learning the lessons

of other countries' success.

<div align="right">(DfE, 2010, p. 3)</div>

In the second foreword of this policy paper the former Secretary of State Michael Gove talked about giving children the 'chance to take their full and equal share in citizenship, shaping their own destiny, and becoming masters of their own fate, allowing individuals to choose a fulfilling job, to shape the society around them and to enrich their inner life' (DfE, 2010, p. 6). To put in place successful educational plans, to raise the level of students' attainment, to close the gap between poor and rich and to make educational opportunities equally accessible for every child, teachers were envisaged as 'valuable asset' at the heart of all these plans. The importance of teaching is described in following words;

> We know that nothing matters more in improving education than giving
>
> every child access to the best possible teaching. There is no calling more
>
> noble, no profession more vital and no service more important than
>
> teaching. It is because we believe in the importance of teaching – as the
>
> means by which we liberate every child to become the adult they aspire to
>
> be – that this White Paper has been written. The importance of teaching
>
> cannot be over-stated. And that is why there is a fierce urgency to our plans
>
> for reform.

<div align="right">(DfE, 2010, p. 7)</div>

The section on 'Teaching and Leadership' placed emphasis on setting up the structures that 'will free schools from externally imposed burdens and give them greater confidence to set their own direction' (DfE, 2010, p. 31). The lack of clarity in this paper underlines the central enigma of how this autonomous control will be articulated concurrently with prescriptive frameworks and guidance. The features of 'greater autonomy' – that teachers and schools are

offered to enjoy remain unstipulated along with the presence of documented benchmarks, an emphasis on phonics teaching, the use of systematic synthetic phonics as the one and only method for teaching reading, the English Baccalaureate age related testing (DfE, 2016b) and league tables. At the same time, the White Paper expressed the need to 'reduce unnecessary prescription and bureaucracy' in order to improve teaching and to 'free schools from externally imposed burdens and give them greater confidence to set their own direction (2010, pp. 65-70).

4.4 Phonics screening check

In recent years, despite the government's high focus on the use of systematic synthetic phonics the ratio of children leaving primary school with the expected level in English had held up at around 80% (Department for Education, 2010). In response to this situation, the UK Coalition government introduced a statutory phonics-based screening test for Year 1 children in 2011. In order to provide the validity and reliability of the test it was independently assessed after piloting it in around 300 schools. In June 2012, for the first time, the phonics screening check was administered in all maintained schools in England. The test consists of 40 words - 20 real words and 20 pseudo words. The rationale behind using the non-words described by government was to check if the child can read the unfamiliar words using the knowledge of sounds. The government's emphasis on phonics screening check and children's lack of ability in reading the pseudo words may give children the feeling that they have failed in learning to read. This could lead to disengaging children from reading instead of creating a love of reading in them. The United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) provided the evidence of what effect the test has on children. In July 2012 Sheffield Hallam University undertook a survey of KS1 schools and classes to the Year 1 phonics screening check on behalf of the United Kingdom Literacy Association. According to most of the respondents to survey it was reported that the non-words confuse children who are taught to

try to make sense of the text. Comments include; several children [fluent readers] were upset by the check and have lost confidence in their reading. As a result of this survey UKLA recommended that "the phonics screening check is not used in subsequent years for all children in Year 1, but is implemented at teachers' discretion to identify specific developmental needs in particular children for whom it is appropriate" (2012, p. 48). Teachers administer the test on an individual basis with every child and the threshold to conclude whether a child has met the expected standard of phonics decoding to an appropriate level is 32. The government expect children to "know the grapheme-phoneme correspondences and be able to blend phonemes in words with the orthographical structures that have been included in the phonics screening check" (DfE, 2011a, p. 7). The test results of 2015 showed that 77% children reached the expected standard of phonics decoding at the end of Year 1, compared with 74% in 2014, 69% in the year 2013 and 58% in 2012 (DfE, 2015). The purpose of the check is to "confirm that all children have learned phonic decoding to an age-appropriate standard" (DfE, 2011a, p. 4). Children who have not reached this level should "receive extra support from their school to ensure they can improve their decoding skills, and will then have the opportunity to retake the phonics screening check" (DfE, 2011a, p. 4). The retake of phonics screening test indicates the government's aim of identifying children who are at risk of reading difficulty. However, identifying children who are at risk of reading difficulty through a test is not supported by research. Duff et al. (2015) argued, "there is no 'gold standard' for the identification of reading difficulty, and any cut-off between 'impaired' and 'normal' reading is arbitrary" (p. 4). A report entitled 'Importance of Phonics: Securing Confident Reading' by the Department for Education (DfE, 2011d) provided the rationale for all the efforts and expenditure behind phonics screening check. By encouraging the use of systematic synthetic phonics and the phonics screening check, it stated "we want to help all children to master the essential mechanics of decoding words early. Once they've

done that, they can quickly move on to develop fluency, comprehension and a lifelong love of books" (DfE, 2011d, p. 6). "Reading can change lives" it declared and "we are committed to improving the teaching of reading in reception and Year 1 of primary school" (DfE, 2011d, p. 1). In order to describe systematic synthetic phonics as an effective approach the paper cited (but does not give reference) the report of the US National Reading Panel (2000); Johnson and Watson's (2005) Clackmannanshire study; the Final Research Report (2007) of the West Dunbartonshire Literacy Initiative; the Australian report Teaching Reading (2005), also the Rose report and Ofsted reports (DfE, 2011d). Political statements have continued to emphasise that there is only one way of teaching children to read i.e. phonics. However, the drive to establish systematic synthetic phonics as the only approach for the teaching of reading in primary education has not been welcomed by academics and teachers, in the same way that the phonics screening check has received a substantial amount of criticism and controversy. Brook (2010) stated that a test 'in a cohort can possibly be 'light touch'. She talked about the consequences when such tests become 'high stakes' with all the 'educational deformations' including: "teaching to the test - reducing attention to other facets of reading - pressure on schools through league tables and being labelled as 'failing' if some arbitrary percentage of their pupils 'fail' the test - anxiety for parents - anxiety for children" (p. 1). There are some more concerns that emerge from the research. In a survey of 3000 teachers conducted by National Union of Teachers (2012) 90% of respondents showed their concern about whether the test will 'provide additional information to teachers on children phonic knowledge over and above their usual assessment' (p. 2). In a nut shell, teachers' freedom is one of the significant aspects that emerged from the discussion with respect to the phonics screening check which is one of the main aims of this research. Exploration of the teachers' perceptions about the phonics screening check made it possible to critically evaluate teachers' freedom within this study. As the government expects from schools that there should be a rise

in proportion of children meeting the expected level in phonics screening check, so, in these circumstances, it was important to ascertain whether teachers really have the freedom to plan their reading lessons in light of their judgements of children's performance? These were among the important issues to research in relation to this study. This study paid attention to phonics screening and the implications of it for practices in the light of new proposed autonomy to teachers.

Now the part of this thesis will turn to look at the set of revised standards for teachers formulated by the coalition government.

4.5 Teachers' standards

In the White Paper (DfE, 2010) it was mentioned that teachers' standards for qualified teacher status will be reviewed 'to establish clear and unequivocal standards'. It was mentioned that despite there being, at the time, 33 such standards, only one of them just focus on teaching and learning (DfE, 2010, p. 26). In the White Paper the government promised that:

> We will ensure that the new standards have a stronger focus on key elements of teaching, including: the best approaches to the teaching of early reading and early mathematics, how best to manage poor behaviour, and how to support children with additional needs, including Special Educational Needs.

(DfE, 2010, p. 26)

The revised standards comprised eight key headings divided into further more subsections. The preamble of the section on teaching and personal and professional conduct make it clear that as professionals, teachers are accountable for adhering and achieving the highest standards while working with pupils and children. These standards seem just to be demanding teachers' expertise in delivering the curriculum and omitting the place of pupil in the learning

context. The new standards prescribed what professional decisions teachers need to make and also what they have to do in the classroom. An example of this high level of prescription can be seen in fourth bullet point of section 3; "if teaching early reading, demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics" (DfE, 2012b, p. 11). Instead of referring to the range of teaching methods, focus is placed on one and only one particular approach (synthetic phonics) to teach reading and this aspect tracks the flow of standards towards the policy of the moment (referred to Rose Report, 2006). Whichever way we look at the educational policies we will find the shadow of government decisions on teachers' practices in a drive to improve children's attainment.

As the data from this study were collected from the Early Years and Key Stage 1 teachers' interviews and observations of their reading sessions, it is pertinent to provide a brief description of EYFS framework and Key Stage 1 curriculum here. The rationale behind this discussion is to explore the underlying key features of the reading curriculum and the approaches and strategies recommended by government to teach reading. This proceeded to further exploration of teachers' perceptions towards several approaches of teaching reading in the policy context.

4.6 The National Curriculum (2013)

On 20 January 2011, Education Secretary Michael Gove announced a review of the national curriculum in England. After the public consultation, the new national curriculum was published on 11 September 2013 which was taught from September 2014. The new curriculum encompasses essential knowledge for all subjects that children need to learn. The statutory programmes of study and attainment targets are set out for English in the same way as for all other subjects taught at Key Stage 1. There is non-statutory content too which schools are not required to follow by law. The programme of study for reading at Key Stage 1

consists of two dimensions: word reading and comprehension. In the curriculum emphasis is placed on developing competence in both dimensions.

Although, the statutory requirements of word reading for Year 1 and 2 look almost identical there is a greater focus on fluency and automatic reading of words in Year 2. In Year 1 the emphasis is placed on establishing the skill of sounding and blending the phonemes with the anticipation that once children have mastered the skill of blending they will move on to building up fluency in reading. In the national curriculum at Key Stage 1 and 2 phonics has been put forward as an approach to teach reading but the document does not refer to synthetic phonics as the most effective approach for the teaching of reading. However, there is a clear tension (discussed fully in literature review chapter) within academic research that the curriculum focused heavily on the phonic knowledge denies opportunities to explore language beyond this. Phonics is admitted as one of the important elements of reading but not the one and only factor (Association of teachers and lecturers; National Union of Teachers, 2013).

4.7 The framework for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, 2014)

The EYFS framework in England comprises seven areas of learning and development, the early learning goals that all children should have to meet by the end of Reception and the assessment requirements. The prime areas of learning and development are: communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. To strengthen the three prime areas children should be supported in following four specific areas: literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design. With regard to reading there are early learning goals;

> [C]hildren read and understand simple sentences. They use phonic
>
> knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately. They

also read some common irregular words. They demonstrate understanding

when talking with others about what they have read.

<div align="right">(DfE, 2014, p.11)</div>

This suggests that in order to raise standards in literacy, the government has enacted the systematic teaching of phonics in the early years and the delivery of the national literacy and numeracy aspects. The framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014) and the new national curriculum introduced in September 2014 are the true reflection of strong emphasis on phonics and teaching of decoding the words.

4.8 The White Paper (DfE, 2016) 'Educational, Excellence Everywhere'

On 17 March (2016) Nicky Morgan, the secretary of state for education, presented the government's White Paper, 'Educational, Excellence Everywhere' (DfE, 2016a). First of all this sets out government agenda to convert all state schools into academies by 2020 and their local authorities will be responsible to facilitate this process. Schools that have not started the process until 2020 or are failing schools will become sponsored academies. (DfE, 2016a). There is much more in the White Paper than this single policy. The White paper described future educational plans under 7 more sections, addressing the issues of teacher recruitment and training, accountability, leadership development, governance, assessment and curriculum funding. The document itself made repeated references to English education becoming 'world class' with further references to 'great teachers', 'great leaders' and 'dynamic MATs' (Multi-Academy Trusts) working in a 'school-led' system characterised by 'freedom' and 'autonomy' (Forum, 2016).

The White Paper committed to drive in 'a knowledge based curriculum as the cornerstone of an excellent, academically rigorous education up to the age of 16' alongside, reforming the national assessments and qualifications. So that they are as challenging as those in the highest performing countries around the world and to help ensure every child leaves primary school

with the essential building blocks to succeed at secondary' (DfE, 2016a, p. 89-91). The reforms in the national curriculum which had already been implemented, were re-iterated in the White Paper (2016a) to demonstrate the government's commitment in providing a 'world class' education. The government vision about the curriculum and emphasis on the core knowledge 'equipping children with core knowledge about the best that has been thought and written' is used to justify a formal approach to assessment through the use of testing (DfE, 2016a, p. 89). It seems that government once again wants to impose curriculum reforms on teachers as it imposed the phonics screening check for assessing Year 1 children. Like the previous White Paper (DfE, 2010), this White Paper (DfE, 2016a) emphasises the aspects of teachers' 'freedom' and 'professional autonomy' by stating that "while setting stretching expectations for the knowledge and skills that each child should acquire, we have given teachers much more professional freedom to choose how to teach that material and how to assess it in the classroom" (DfE, 2016a, p. 90). This freedom will exist in just one case when teachers will deliver the knowledge–based curriculum effectively (DfE, 2016a, p. 90). In relation to reading which is a significant underlying concern in this study, it would appear that the government is giving freedom to teachers by asking them to choose any approach to teach reading as long as it is phonics. In other words the government is constantly referring to autonomy for teachers in a scenario where teachers' practices are state-controlled. In this sense "teachers become a set of recipes for delivering a curriculum into the head of learners" (Goouch & Lambirth, 2007, p. 90) and their role becomes invisible by taking no consideration on their thoughts and expertise. It would appear that policy makers behind the curtain make decisions without even trying to know the views of teachers.

According to the White Paper (DfE, 2016a);

> Assessment allows teachers, parents and the government to have an
> overview of pupils' success and to focus efforts where necessary. We

introduced a phonics screening check at Year 1 in 2012 to ensure that all

pupils are taught the building blocks of literacy according to the evidence of

what works best.

(DfE, 2016a, P. 92)

Such statements indicate that the government's emphasis on testing may leave teachers under pressure to deliver the curriculum and teach to the test, alongside reducing time for the development of children's love of reading. It is supported from the research that children learn more in creative lessons (Hutchings, 2015). What is evident here is that such accountability reforms are likely to have a major influence on education system.

1.5 Reading underachievement

One of the important aspects related to this study is to explore teachers' perceptions towards different strategies used for the teaching of reading. The success of any strategy is generally measured through children's performance in national and international testing therefore, it is important to discuss the level of children's reading achievement in England. In recent years different governments and organizations have given considerable attention to literacy. Despite the best efforts of England's government, reading underachievement continues to garner significant attention and has been identified many times as a matter of much concern. In order to measure the performance of countries' educational systems, international surveys of students' achievement are gaining much popularity among governments around the world. In an attempt to address and justify the underperformance of schools, policy makers and politicians often refer to England's position in various international league tables and by taking the international testing results into consideration. The concern related to the declining level of children's reading in England is supported by the comparison of international students' reading achievement. One example includes, *Progress in International Reading*

Literacy Study (PIRLS) which compares the attainment and attitudes to reading of over 200,000 9 and 10-year-old children around the world. The study first took place in 2001 and a second survey was in 2006. PIRLS (2011) involved children in 45 countries around the world. The Russian Federation, Hong Kong, Finland and Singapore were the top-performing countries in reading. England's overall reading achievement was well above the international average and significantly higher than that demonstrated in 2006 but it was not listed among many other high achieving countries (PIRLS, 2011). The Ofsted report which is based on evidence from inspection of English between April 2008 and March 2011 in 133 primary schools, 128 secondary schools and 4 special schools in England highlighted that since 2008 standards have not improved in reading and a sizeable minority of pupils have not acquired the necessary basic skills in literacy when they move into Key Stage 2. It was suggested by Ofsted (2012) that primary schools should secure pupils' early reading skills by the end of Key Stage 1. "There can be no more important subject than English in the school curriculum. English is a pre-eminent world language, it is at the heart of our culture and it is the language medium in which most of our pupils think and communicate. Literacy skills are also crucial to pupils' learning in other subjects across the curriculum" (Ofsted, 2010, p. 4). To raise the level of early reading is always at the heart of government's educational policies in England.

> Tackling reading failure is an urgent priority for the Department for Education. Reading can change lives and we are committed to improving the teaching of reading in Reception and Year 1 of primary school. As well as mastering the basic skills of learning to read, we want to encourage children to experience the rewards of reading and develop a lifelong love of books.
>
> (Department for Education, 2011, p. 1)

OECD is one of the major organizations involved in the international comparison survey of achievement. The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2012) is the fifth survey which aimed to assess the extent to which 15-year-old students near the end of compulsory education have acquired key knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in modern societies. OECD in its surveys assessed student's achievement in three key areas: reading, mathematics and science. In relation to the interest of current study I have discussed the England's reading results here. PISA (2012) results highlighted that the United Kingdom performed around the average in reading, compared with the 34 OECD countries that participated in the 2012 PISA assessment. Mean reading performance has remained unchanged since 2006 and 2009. When the PISA (2012) results were published the government was concerned about the UK rank in the list of other participating countries. At the time, Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove made the statement that "since 1990 our performance in these league tables has been at best, stagnant, at worst declining". In his statement Michael Gove claimed that the league table (2012) showed that in order to improve the performance of children there is a need to reform the education system. In one of his speeches he told MPs that his reforms, such as changing the curriculum, school autonomy and directing financial support towards poorer pupils were designed to prevent England's schools from "falling further behind" (Sean, 2013). Mr Gove in his statement said that "in our drive to eliminate illiteracy we have introduced a screening check at age 6 to make sure every child is reading fluently. Furthermore, Michael Gove claimed that the issues - schools and teachers autonomy, teachers' qualification, accountability framework for schools - addressed in the White paper 'the importance of teaching' were adopted in response to PISA 2009 results (Gove, 2011). Interpretation of the PISA results from the government and policymakers indicates the influence of these international surveys' upon the country's educational policy. Alongside that there are a number of on-going debates that have identified

the problematic issues related to the results of international surveys for example concerns about the methodology of PISA like: translation of materials, data analysis models, student sampling and contextual representation (Goldstein, 2004). With regard to this study the focus is not on the technical aspects of this survey. Instead, I want to explore how these international surveys' results were used to bring reforms in the educational system (change in the primary curriculum and teachers' autonomy) which is one of the significant aspects of this thesis.

1.6 The importance of the role of the teacher

'Regardless of the teaching method, one aspect is paramount for success in reading and every aspect of learning: the expertise of the teacher' (Jolliffe et al., 2012, p. 9).

Elizabeth Truss (Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare) talked about a 'cultural shift'. A culture in which freedom will be given to teachers from 'prescriptive top-down diktats and strategies' (DfE, 2013a).

Similarly, in the new national curriculum (DfE, 2013b) of England teachers' freedom is acknowledged in following words: "the national curriculum provides an outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons to promote the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum" (DfE, 2013b, p. 6). The problem with these statements is the notion of contrast with reality. How can the government expect teachers to innovate and move beyond the national curriculum when they are required to do phonics and more specifically synthetic phonics and then prepare the children for phonics screening check because their schools are accountable to government for the result of test? These were all the issues that this study explored in the light of teachers' perceptions.

Besides all these acknowledgements from government, the role of the teacher in deciding effective methods for teaching of reading is still part of argument and debate which provides

the evidence of gap in policy and practice. Teachers work every day supporting children to learn to read. Educational researchers spend thousands of hours in finding out the effective ways of how teachers can teach reading and how children can learn to read. When educational policies are made, ministers of education do not consider the views of teachers and evidence provided by research. They do something different without listening to the teachers and pondering upon research, "instead, they look for 'favourites', experts whose views correspond with their party's philosophy of-the-moment" (UKLA, 2010, p. 1). According to Whitty (2000) in England the teaching profession has never enjoyed the 'licensed autonomy' and is subjugated by set targets, league tables, national testing, prescriptive educational policies, national curriculum reforms and performance criteria for teachers and schools. Poulson et al., (2001) also argued that "it is over-simplistic to assume that specifying certain kind of knowledge and pedagogy for all teachers will result in an increase in student achievement" (p. 272). Given the context of literature and policy this study further explored the role that teachers play in the development of children's reading skills.

1.7 Positionality statement

It is crucial for the reader to recognise my position as a researcher so that he/she can take this into account. Positionality in research refers to factors like race, gender, levels of education, contextual background, sexuality and the implications of these factors on how we do our research. Therefore, it is important to provide a clear statement of my own positionality and how it has an impact on my research. While conducting this study my positionality was influenced by my identity as an international doctoral student having a background of teacher education and training in another culture. I had personal experience of primary school teaching in Pakistan and was interested in teaching of early reading. I realised that the teaching of reading is a challenging issue for teachers and an area where teachers usually face

problems. I was also aware that reading is the foundation upon which success in other areas of the curriculum depends more heavily. Therefore, it was a natural drive to focus on educational issues related to the teaching of reading in primary sector. My interest in the teaching of reading has led me to the view that there is a need to broaden this interest through educational research. As a sole investigator and being a teacher, it seemed appropriate to conduct this research in a school. I was aware of the significance of early reading in the curriculum but my position was of an outsider researcher who had little prior knowledge of the group and context being researched. In this regard, being an outsider to England's primary school system, I started this journey by interrogating the policy documents and reviewing the educational literature akin to teaching of early reading. Consequently, I started to realise that in England past and present governments have introduced major policies to make reforms in literacy teaching. In an attempt to provide effective teaching of reading, educational systems and reading programmes around the world are informed by research evidence. In this manner, the government of England proclaimed that primary schools should focus on direct instruction of reading by adopting a systematic synthetic approach. Therefore, teaching children to read through synthetic phonics has become common practice in primary education in England as a result of these policy influences. A thorough understanding of educational literature and policies about reading indicated the controversies surrounding several approaches of teaching reading and the pressures on teachers. In this context, the crux of my study rested upon the exploration of primary teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their practices, as well as the challenges and difficulties that teachers face as a result of change in policy with regard to teaching of early reading. I was intended to explore how this policy context impacted on teachers' practices in England and, for this, it was necessary to gain insights into teachers' perceptions about the teaching of reading.

The position of being an outsider to this context helped me to adopt a particular stance towards the world of knowledge and also influenced the decision making in relation to the research design. The research design adopted in this case study was influenced by my positionality and aims of this research. As an outsider, I found it difficult to gain access to participants. My limited knowledge of the English educational context resulted in reducing any researcher-bias that I might have brought to the study. Moreover, respondents were willing to reveal in-depth sensitive information as they will have no future contact with the researcher.

1.8 Significance of this research

The purpose of this research was to explore primary teachers' pedagogical knowledge and practices related to the teaching of early reading. Teachers' pedagogical knowledge in relation to teaching of reading involves the processes and methods of teaching that they use in their classes. The pedagogical knowledge also covers other issues related to children's learning: classroom environment and management, strategies used for the assessment of reading and understanding of curriculum. Teachers' perceptions of all these aspects were investigated through the semi-structure interviews and observations of their classes. This study was carried out at a time when first phonics screening check has been conducted, new teachers' standards were in place and above all a new national curriculum has been published. All these reforms in policy played an important part in this research because on one side government was proposing greater autonomy to innovate, in contrast, on the other side, the use of systematic synthetic phonics as the one and only way for raising literacy levels has been recommended. In this scenario that was the right time to explore teachers' perceptions and the impact these policies have on their practices. This time of change made the study more significant because although the topic of this study has already been investigated by researchers, but within the current policy context there is a gap in the research

in relation to teachers' perceptions of their autonomy. Through the observation of teachers' reading classes I also made an effort to inform policy-makers about the gap between policy and practice. Moreover, it was hoped that the findings of the study might helped to draw forth some significant aspects for educational authorities to consider when reviewing and evaluating policies and frameworks for the teaching of early reading.

1.9 Research aims

Underpinning the study is the belief that the effect of reading instruction is altered by the literacy practices specific to teachers' knowledge and their professional freedom. Thus, for part of this study, I explored teachers' perspectives of the various forms of phonics, methods and techniques they used for the development of children's early reading skills and teachers' responses to policy changes in relation to the primary national curriculum and their professional autonomy. In accordance to the research aims, this study sought to explore how teachers perceived their professional autonomy and to what extent they felt autonomous in their professional practices and judgements. Given the growing body of literature on reading development, the centrality of teacher's role in the government specified rigorous policies and with the implementation of new curriculum (2013), in this study teachers' educational history, professional development, teaching experiences, their pedagogical knowledge, and classroom practices were investigated. The core research aims with respect to this study were as follows:

- ➢ To identify the impact that primary teachers' pedagogical knowledge and autonomy has on the teaching of reading.
- ➢ To deepen the understanding of teachers' perceptions of different approaches of phonics for teaching early reading.
- ➢ To contribute to the theory and practice of teaching reading through phonics in England.

The nature of the methodology here is exploratory. Participants' realities were explored through their perceptions and experiences of the natural setting. Therefore, the goal of this research is to characterise how teachers make sense of various methods of teaching reading and their professional freedom while planning and conducting reading instructions.

1.10 Research questions

The research reported here was provoked by the background context referred above and informed by the literature review. The study intended to explore teachers' pedagogical knowledge, their perceptions of the government's policies for teaching early reading and the ways in which they embraced professional autonomy in their existing practices. The intention was to present the broad perspectives and meanings that participants held and not to limit their views (Creswell, 2014). The study sought to answer the following open-ended research questions:

➢ How do primary teachers demonstrate aspects (knowledge, skill and autonomy) of professional identity while teaching reading to children in their classes?

➢ Which strategies and approaches for teaching reading do primary school teachers adopt after the implementation of new national curriculum (2013)?

➢ How much professional autonomy do teachers feel they have when making key decisions for the teaching of early reading?

➢ What are primary teachers' perspectives towards teaching reading through phonics, and the autonomy proposed in recent policy?

1.11 The structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters, including the present chapter. Chapter two will principally present a review of the relevant literature about different theories of reading development, various methods to teach reading, the phonics and whole language controversy

and teachers' professional autonomy. It will also cover the identification of gaps that present research will attempt to address.

Chapter three refers to the rationale behind setting this study within the interpretative paradigm and the epistemological stance of social constructivism. This will be followed by the rationale for using case study as a preferred research design. The detail illustration of the instruments used for data collection will also be provided. An account of the detailed procedures in undertaking the field work, the process of data analysis and ethical code governed in this study will be presented.

Chapter four consists of reporting the data and analysis of teachers' interviews and class observations and finally chapter five aims to provide a summary based on the analysis and interpretation of the findings from chapter 4. For this I focused on themes arose from the findings. The detailed discussion of the research results, a consideration of the limitations, the implications of the findings and recommendations in relation to teaching of reading in the England, followed by the suggestions for further research will be included in this chapter.

Chapter two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, issues related to the teaching of early reading, approaches that are widely employed to teach reading and the theories that inform these approaches are discussed. Literature on teachers' pedagogical knowledge of early reading and their professional autonomy to teach reading is discussed too. It also draws upon a wide range of literature considering how commentators have theorised the notion of teacher autonomy. It reaches the conclusion that there has been a continuing loss of professional autonomy as a result of the growth of marketization and commodification outlined in the earlier chapter. In addition, an account of theoretical perspectives and review of various relevant areas helped to inform the research questions, methodological choice and analysis process in this study.

2.2 Theories of reading

Several developmental theories have been presented for early reading acquisition, (Ehri, 1992; Frith, 1985) with the aim of interpreting the process of learning to read. Researchers and language experts have discussed the reading models. A developmental theory/model can be understood as a sequence of steps in which each step requires the implementation of a new strategy. In keeping with this perspective, reading can be perceived as a developmental order of steps with the adoption of different strategies at different points. Amplification of different developmental models/theories, the outcome of understanding and belief about how young learners develop the acquisition in reading has influenced the practice of teachers.

2.2.1Goodman's psycholinguistic model

Among the models that have influenced the reading debate is Goodman's psycholinguistic model, in which different cue-systems are 'orchestrated' (the idea of orchestration comes from Bussis et al. who propose that reading is the act of orchestrating diverse knowledge) (Graham & Kelly, 2008, p. 4). A top down model of reading process was offered by Goodman. Goodman (1967) and other psycholinguist researchers (Smith, 1971) put together the disciplines of psychology and linguistics by showing interest in the belief that reading is a psycholinguistic process with the interaction between thought and language. They also believe that psychology may contribute something to their study of language processes (Goodman, 1982, p.18). To understand the developmental process of reading Goodman used 'miscue analysis' as a tool. A 'miscue' is not considered as an error. Instead it is defined as an 'actual observed response in oral reading which does not match the expected response (written material) (Goodman, 1973, p. 5). The outcomes of miscue-analysis have been used by Goodman (1982) to develop a model of reading which is commonly referred to as the 'Goodman's Model of Reading'. Goodman made lots of contributions to research in reading. He offered a model which was alternative of the bottom up model of reading and according to top down model the role of the reader is integral to the reading process rather than the text. According to this model the process of reading development is surrounded by three sources of information or cue systems: semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic. Goodman explained how a child goes through the learning process of reading:

> He makes predictions of the grammatical structure, using the control over
> language structure he learned when he learned oral language. He supplies
> sematic concepts to get the meaning from the structure. In turn, his sense of
> syntactic structure and meaning make it possible to predict the graphic
> input so he is highly selective, sampling the print to confirm his prediction.

Drawing from cognitive psychology it was argued that such models reflect what it is that skilled, rather than beginner readers do. The proponents of bottom up model believed that in the early stages of reading the importance of phonics was marginalised (Graham & Kelly, 2008). By signifying decoding as a first phase cognitive psychologist (Firth, 1985, & Ehri, 1987) described early reading as a staged process.

2.2.2 Cognitive developmental theories of reading acquisition

Marsh et al, (1981) signified a four staged cognitive developmental theory of reading acquisition. Briefly:

> [R]ote learning is the first strategy for learning new words. This is complemented by so-called linguistic guessing, that is a child often tries to predict a word from context. At stage 2, for the first time guesses are based on visual letter cues as well as linguistic context. At stage 3, sequential decoding in letter-by-letter and phoneme-by-phoneme fashion is introduced. At stage 4, hierarchical decoding appears, that is, the interpretation of each phoneme becomes dependent on its letter context. Lastly, at this stage, the analogy strategy first appears, which from then on is used more and more for the successful reading of new words.

<div align="right">(Frith, 1985)</div>

2.2.3 Frith model of reading development

Later, the cognitive developmental theory offered by Marsh et al. (1981) was adapted and modified by Frith (1985). She generated the model of literacy development based on three phases with each phase recognised by three strategies called: logographic, alphabetic and orthographic.

2.2.3.1 The logographic phase of sight-word reading

In this first phase, child uses the logographic strategy. He/she identifies the words as any other visual objects and recognises the familiar words instantly. The child cannot tackle unfamiliar words as 'letter order and phonological factors' are of secondary importance at this stage of reading development. A small number of words are identified through visual features such as the word 'follow' read as 'yellow' due to the same double 'll' spelled in both words. Frith (1985) clarified; the term **'**logographic' covers the same process respectively as Marsh et al.'s rote learning strategy. From her statement however, it would seem rather that the logographic strategy covers the first two of Marsh et al.'s four stages. According to Stuart and Coltheart (1988):

> A rote learning strategy is available to the child at any of Marsh et al.'s four
>
> stages, whereas Frith wishes to make a distinction between the logographic
>
> strategy, which precedes the use of phonology as a means of decoding, and
>
> the orthographic strategy, which depends upon the prior establishment of
>
> phonological decoding. This distinction is lost if the logographic strategy
>
> can be identified with Marsh et al.'s rote learning strategy.

(Stuart & Coltheart, 1988, p. 143)

2.2.3.2 The alphabetic phase of sight-word reading

The second stage of Frith's model involves the alphabetic strategy. The child acquires the knowledge of phonemes, graphemes and their correspondences. Alphabetic skills involve a systematic approach that Frith (1985) called 'decoding grapheme by grapheme'. At this stage child is able to blend the phonemes together to make words. Letter order and phonological factors play a crucial role and the child can attempt to read the unknown or even nonsense words (Frith, 1985, p. 306).

 Frith (1985) described that the alphabetic strategy cover the same processes of Marsh et al.'s sequential decoding strategy, to translate regular consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words to

words with short vowels sounds. In response to Frith's description Stuart and Coltheart (1988) argued that there is a difference between grapheme-phoneme correspondence and letter-sound correspondence. For example if one considers the word 'chain'. Five correspondences c/h/a/i/n would be delivered in letter-sound translation, which makes it hard to read the word chain. A grapheme-phoneme translation on the other hand would deliver three correspondences ch/ai/n/ and provides an excellent chance of reading the word as chain. They also defined grapheme as "those letters which need to be taken together as a unit in order to map on to a single phoneme" (Stuart & Coltheart, 1988, p. 143). With regard to this definition the processes of Frith's alphabetic strategy do not match with the processes of Marsh et al.'s sequential decoding strategy.

2.2.3.3 The orthographic phase of sight-word reading

This last stage of the development of reading acquired the orthographic strategy. Orthographic skills refer to the instant and automatic reading of words without first sounding out the letters individually. As Frith (1985) stated "orthographic skills refer to the instant analysis of words into orthographic units without phonological conversion. The orthographic units ideally coincide with morphemes" (p. 306). At this stage children access the meaning quickly from text by making links with the already known words in the previous stages. This process of development is faster than the other two stages.

Stuart and Coltheart (1988) reviewed and evaluated the stage theories of reading acquisition, and argued that the evidence proposed by Frith (1985) is sometimes questionable. As an example, Stuart and Coltheart referred the evidence for the logographic theory which Frith (1985) found in a review paper by Torrey (1979). This paper reviews seven formal studies of early readers. These studies looked at linguistic factors and concluded that when knowledge of letters (including their names and sounds) were investigated, early readers performed well. Parents of early readers often mentioned having taught them letter-sound relationships. So the

early readers in fact excelled in the kinds of knowledge that relate rather to Frith's alphabetic phase than to her logographic phase (Stuart & Coltheart, 1988, p. 144).

2.2.4 Ehri's model of reading development

Ehri (2005) in his model explained four phases of reading development with each phase labelled to reflect the type of alphabetic knowledge. The four phases are: pre-alphabetic, partial alphabetic, full alphabetic and consolidated alphabetic.

2.2.4.1 Pre-alphabetic phase

In pre-alphabetic phase children are at the earliest stage of learning to read. They know little about the alphabetic system and letter-sound connection. Children read words by remembering visual or contextual cues. For example, they can retell stories heard many times and guess words from pictures or by using cues. Ehri (2005) cited Share and Gur (1999) to describe how children read their personal names in this phase. Two types of connections, contextual and visuographic were found while children read their names. Contextual cues are those lying outside the printed word, such as stickers on personal lockers next to personal names. Visuographic cues are non-phonetic graphic features in the printed word itself, such as the two sticks in William or the shape of the letter K in Jack. In short, the lack of knowledge in naming or sounding out the letters directed pre-alphabetic readers to adopt a visual cue approach by default. The lack of an alphabetic mnemonic system makes it difficult for children to learn to read words accurately (Ehri, 2005).

2.2.4.2 Partial alphabetic phase

"The partial alphabetic phase emerges when beginners acquire letter knowledge and can use it to remember how to read words by forming partial connections in memory" (Ehri, 2005, p.142). In this phase children read words often by enunciating the first and last phonemes in a

word but get confused with similar spelt words like 'spoon' and 'skin' having similar boundary letters. Due to the lack of full alphabetic knowledge, especially vowels, children in this phase are not able to segment the word's pronunciation into all of its phonemes (Ehri, 2005).

2.2.4.3 Full alphabetic phase

At this stage, children can blend all the phonemes in a word; this is possible because they are familiar with the major grapheme-phoneme correspondences. According to Glazzard and Stokoe (2013) this ability to blend all the phonemes in a word depends upon the phase of the alphabetic code. Until they have not been taught the vowel diagraph /oa/ they will be unable to blend the phonemes in /b/oa/t/. However, once they are familiar with this grapheme-phoneme correspondence, they can decode the phonetically irregular words (p. 45). Eventually readers become more accurate in word reading and read the unfamiliar words too.

2.2.4.4 Consolidated alphabetic phase

In this phase, children become familiar with letters patterns, spellings of rimes, phonemes and morphemes. Readers learn to read words that share letter patterns symbolising the same phoneme blend in different words, for example, king, thing, bring and sing, a consolidated unit is formed. Knowing 'ing' as a consolidated unit means that readers can read it as a whole rather than as a sequence of grapheme–phoneme units. Knowing larger blends contributes to the learning of sight words by reducing the memory load (Ehri, 2005, p. 150).

These stage theories illustrate how the child takes steps in the developmental process of learning to read and how a transition to the next steps occurs. Theories of reading are expanded and they informed today's notions of word reading and its instructions.

2.3 Approaches to the teaching of reading

Due to the lack of agreement over the significance of different reading skills - word recognition, decoding, spelling or meaning making - the proponents of several approaches

have claimed superiority for their suggested programmes (Wray & Medwell, 2002). An example of this can be found in debates about whole language and phonics. The psycholinguistics support the meaning-emphasis approach often described as top-down (whole language) teaching approach. On the other hand emphasis is placed on word recognition as a primary mean, thus suggesting a bottom-up approach (phonics).

2.3.1 Whole language

The initiators of whole language found it challenging to define the term precisely. Although, it is based upon the notion that language is acquired through actual usage not through practicing its separate parts (Goodman, 1967; Smith, 1971). Whole language is not defined as an approach per se it is described as a philosophy of how literacy best develops in learners (French et al., 1990 & Ellis, 2014). According to the whole language perspective Goodman (1967) described reading as a 'psycho-linguistic guessing game' which involves an interaction between thought and language (p.127). In order to anticipate the words, children use top down processing skills are based on prediction in relation to the text they read. They use predictive cues to identify words and determine meaning which is embedded in the whole text, within a sentence and initially in the word order of a sentence. This ability to make sense from the cues of context, demonstrate the guessing-game nature of reading is pivotal to the whole language approach (Riley, 1999, p. 31). In 1998 Goodman's approach to reading development was reflected in the 'Searchlights' model (as mentioned in chapter one) of reading and its development. By mapping on the cue-system the 'semantic' information source was represented as 'knowledge of context', the 'syntactic' information source was represented as 'grammatical knowledge', 'visual' information source was represented as 'word recognition and graphic knowledge' and processing of letter-sound mappings was represented as phonics (Stuart, Stainthorp, & Snowling, 2008, p. 59). The searchlights model governed the teaching of reading from 1998 to 2006. In general, the whole language approach

accentuates the literature-based reading aiming to construct meaning, de-emphasizes the letter-level processes and the direct teaching of phonics. However, there are critiques in the educational literature who criticised the element of searchlights model. According to Brooks (2002) the way searchlights model give equal importance to the four elements is a misapprehension - 'the four focuses are not meant to have equal prominence for learners at all stages or in all situations'(Brooks, 2002, p. 20). Goodman's (1967) depiction of reading as a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' was denied by Stanovich & Stanovich (1995) who said that the experimental evidence made him realised that Goodman's description of reading was wrong. Ofsted also criticised the model in following words:

> The "searchlights" model … has not been effective enough in terms of illustrating where the intensity of the "searchlights" should fall at the different stages of learning to read. While the full range of strategies is used by fluent readers, beginning readers need to learn how to decode effortlessly, using their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and the skills of blending sounds together. The result has been an approach which diffuses teaching at the earliest stages, rather than concentrating it on phonics.

(Ofsted, 2003-2004, p. 48)

Brooks (2002) argued that there is an 'error of optimism in the NLS description when it says 'The more searchlights that are switched on, the less critical it is if one of them fails'. Brooks further argued that "there is only one spot/searchlight. It can be switched on (or off), but it can only be directed to one aspect of the cognitive task of reading at a time" (p. 1).

2.3.2 Phonics

The term 'phonics' refers to a method of teaching young children to read by learning the relationship between phonemes and graphemes and it plays a clear part in teaching the

complex process of literacy (Ellis & Moss, 2014). The role that phonics play in learning to read and the most effective forms of phonics instruction (synthetic/analytic) have been debated among the literacy community. Advocates of phonics believed that to teach early reading to beginners is a complex task. Phonics has been considered as a very important approach among others to this task that can be used by reader within the context of a rich and broad literacy curriculum (Lewis & Ellis, 2006; Morris, 1984; Wyse & Goswami, 2008; White, 2005). In essence it is a bottom up model of reading that contrasts with the top down model of whole language teaching methods. It is accepted among educators and researchers as a general view that systematic phonics instruction plays a vital role in teaching early reading (Erhi et al., 2001). The Australian reading report concluded:

> The evidence is clear, direct systematic instruction in phonics during the early years of schooling is an essential foundation for teaching children to read. Findings from the research evidence indicate that all students learn best when teachers adopt an integrated approach to reading that explicitly teaches phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension. This approach, coupled with effective support from the child's home, is critical to success.

(Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005, p. 11)

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) carried out a research about reading instruction and provided a significant report of the US National Reading Panel (NRP). In order to evaluate the research evidence NRP conducted a meta-analysis. Studies involved in the analysis had to provide the data, testing the hypothesis that systematic phonics instruction improves reading performance more than instruction providing unsystematic phonics or no phonics instruction. As a result of this extensive meta-analysis the findings of the report provided solid support for the conclusion that "systematic phonics

instruction makes a bigger contribution to children's growth in reading than alternative programs providing unsystematic or no phonics instruction" (National Institute of child Health and Human Development, 2000, p. 92). Later a systematic review of experimental research on the use of phonics instruction in the teaching of reading was conducted by the Universities of York and Sheffield. The methodology of NRP was refined but this review was based on evidence from randomised controlled trials only. In order to investigate the effectiveness of several approaches to the teaching of early reading and spelling, the review also clarified that within a broad literacy curriculum systematic phonics instruction seemed more effective for children's progress in reading. However, the effect on reading comprehension was trivial (Torgerson, Brooks & Hall, 2006). In 2005, the Australian government enquiry concluded the same way as US and England:

> Teachers (should) provide systematic, direct and explicit phonics
>
> instruction so that children master the essential alphabetic code-breaking
>
> skills required for foundational reading proficiency. Equally, that teachers
>
> provide an integrated approach to reading that supports the development of
>
> oral language, vocabulary, grammar, reading fluency, comprehension and
>
> the literacies of new technologies.

(Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005, p.14)

From 1998 to 2006 the 'searchlights model' governed the teaching of reading in England. In 2006 the government announced a review of the teaching of early reading which was commissioned by Jim Rose the ex-inspector and education consultant. On the basis of evidence reviewed by Rose, synthetic phonics as a 'universal intervention' was introduced. According to the Rose's (2006a) recommendation, in England all primary schools were required to use systematic synthetic phonics programmes 'first and fast' as the core approach for teaching reading. Consequently the government of England mandated that systematic

synthetic phonics should be adopted in all University teacher education programmes and state schools as a prime approach for teaching early reading. However, besides less agreement can be seen in the educational community over views that phonics instruction is the one and only approach for becoming a good reader.

2.4 The phonics versus whole language controversy

Chall who introduced the term, 'the Great Debate' in the subtitle of her book '*Learning to Read*' (1967) described that issues of direct instruction and whole language are central to the teaching and learning of reading. She was fully aware of the similarities and differences between the two points of views. In Chall (1992/1993) she stated:

> Whole language proponents tend to view learning to read as a natural process, developing in ways similar to language. Therefore, like language, most whole language proponents say it is not necessary to teach reading directly. Direct instruction models, on the other hand, view reading as needing to be taught, and taught systematically.
>
> (Chall, 1992/1993, p, 8)

Chall (1992/1993) also added:

> Generally, direct instruction models favour the systematic teaching and learning of the relationships of sounds and symbols. This goes under many names—phonics, decoding, phonological awareness, word analysis, word attack, phonetic analysis, sound-symbol relations, etc.
>
> (Chall, 1992/1993, p, 8)

Chall cited a number of research studies as evidence that systematic instruction in phonics, along with the reading of books, produced better results than no phonics or incidental phonics. In the light of substantial research evidence Beck and Juel (1995) argued for an early learning of decoding skills which predicts the later attainment in reading comprehension (p.

2). Riley (1999) also discussed the decoding skills of reading and suggested that "for the young child to become a fluent accurate and fast reader, she has to be able to break words into their constituent sounds (i.e. to segment phonemes) and to map those sounds onto the relevant letters or groups of letters accurately" (p. 66).

In contrast to the above mention arguments, there is less agreement that phonics is the one and only most effective approach for teaching early reading (Dombey et al., 2010 & NELP, 2008). Smith's work is characterised by its unrelenting attacks on the teaching of phonics. In Smith's view due to the unreliability of word-decoding system and lack of emphasis upon meaning phonics is not helpful in the learning of reading (Wray & Medwell, 1994). UKLA considered that "the heavy dose of phonics will not bring children back into the international running" (Dombey et al., 2010). In Hall's view;

> Phonics teaching is far from all that beginning readers need to become successful readers….. Beginning readers must be taught how to use all the cues and strategies that will help them make sure of text and this will include strategies to decode words as well as strategies for comprehending text. Phonics teaching is an important part of this story, but it is not the whole story.

(Hall, 2006, p. 21)

These debates place phonics and whole language on two different ends of reading instructions. Despite the (at times) controversies, the ultimate goal of both the whole language and phonics approaches is to enable readers to get meaning from text independently. Rarely, have the advocates of phonics favoured the teaching of only phonics (Chall, 1989) nor do the proponents of whole language negate the effectiveness of letter-sound relationships. Many educators support a cohesive approach which supports both direct teaching of phonics and meaningful whole language experiences. For Goodman (1992/1993)

53

phonics has a role to play in reading, and in his view, whole language is whole so it does include phonics as well. The effectiveness of the combined use of phonics and whole language approaches is also supported by research evidence. Dahl & Scharer's (2000) research in whole language classrooms provided the evidence that within teaching and learning events phonics instruction from learner-centered perspective was found in these classrooms. In the same study Dahl and Scharer (2000) suggested that "discussions about phonics and whole language must move away from an artificial, simplistic dichotomy that does not reflect the reality of practice in whole language classrooms" (p. 593). It was also argued by other researchers that phonics versus whole language controversies have "generated acrimony, sapped the field's energies and most important of all have confused and demoralized the educators" (Stanovich & Stanovich, 1995). The focal point of contention is based on the means by which reading is learned. Unfortunately, within the educational community no one appropriate method has been found to solve the literacy problem (Hempenstall, 1997, p. 399).

2.5 Synthetic versus analytic phonics

Synthetic phonics refers to the blending of grapheme phoneme correspondences to decode words (Watts & Gardner, 2012-2013). In an analytic phonics programme, children learn letter sounds in the context of words that they have been taught to recognise by sight; the letters are generally taught first of all in the initial position of words and then the children's attention is drawn to letters in all positions of words. In a synthetic phonics programme, children are taught letter sounds very rapidly and after the first few letters have been taught they are shown how to blend or synthesise the sounds together to pronounce unfamiliar printed words, spelling is taught by means of phonemic analysis (Johnston & Watson, 2004). From 2004, research about synthetic phonics carried out in Clackmanshire, had a significant impact on literacy policy in England. This research offered stronger evidence that children taught by

synthetic phonics method have better reading, spelling and phonemic awareness than two other groups taught by analytic phonics. The synthetic phonics approach was considered more effective than analytic phonics (Johnston & Watson 2004). Later, it was revealed by the findings of England's Education Select Committee Enquiry into teaching children to read:

> In view of the evidence from the Clackmannanshire study…..We recommend a review of the NLS to determine whether its current prescriptions and recommendations are the best available methodology for the teaching of reading in primary schools. Further large-scale, comparative research on the best ways of teaching children to read, comparing synthetic phonics 'fast and first' with other methods (for example analytical phonics and the searchlights model promoted in the NLS) is also necessary to determine which methods of teaching are most effective for which children.

> (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2005, p. 34)

A comparison of long term effects of synthetic versus analytic phonics indicated that after 6 years at school children taught by synthetic phonics approach had significantly in advance skills in word reading, spelling and reading comprehension than those taught by analytic phonics approach (Johnston, McGeown, & Watson, 2012). There are a large number of controversies in the debates about the effectiveness of synthetic approach to phonics. Wyse and Styles (2007) in their paper, reviewed the international research into the teaching of early reading, in order to evaluate the research evidence which supports the recommendation by Rose. In this paper it was argued that UK government's action to change the National Curriculum as a result of Rose report's recommendations showed a change in pedagogy which is not justified by research. In Wyse and Styles's view the conclusion of Rose report that teachers and trainee teachers should teach early reading through synthetic phonics "first and fast" is wrong (p. 35-41). One of the questions addressed in the report of the National

Reading Panel was: Are some types of phonics instruction more effective than others? As concerned with differences between analytic and synthetic phonics NRP concluded:

> Specific systematic phonics programs are all significantly more effective than non-phonics programs; however, they do not appear to differ significantly from each other in their effectiveness although more evidence is needed to verify the reliability of effect sizes for each program.
>
> (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000, p. 93)

Torgerson et al. (2006) also stated the conclusion that 'there is currently no strong RCT evidence that any one form of systematic phonics is more effective than any other (p. 49). In Australia, the Department of Education, Science and Training reviewed research on reading and determined:

> While the evidence indicates that some teaching strategies are more effective than others, no one approach of itself can address the complex nature of reading difficulties. An integrated approach requires that teachers have a thorough understanding of a range of effective strategies, as well as knowing when and why to apply them.
>
> (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005, p.14)

Watts and Gardner (2013) did a comparative analysis of systematic synthetic phonics and the intensive teaching of high frequency words by using multiple methods of miscue analysis, Salford Reading test and a phonemic skills test. The study suggested 'the current reliance on synthetic phonics, as the exclusive method of teaching early reading, is mis-placed and is not sufficient alone' (p. 106). Similarly, Glazzard and Stokoe (2013) acknowledged the importance of systematic synthetic phonics and its significance in reading. Moreover, they claimed that systematic synthetic phonics will not provide all the tools that a child needs to become a reader. They added, "It needs to be taught in a creative way and in the context of a

broad and rich language and literacy curriculum" (p. 155-156). Given conflicting evidence, the question arises as to the exclusive use of synthetic phonics for early reading. What is also evident from the review of the theoretical literature on different models of reading acquisition and the debate about an appropriate pedagogy for the teaching of reading is that there remains no consensus on the most effective way to teach reading. Further evidence is needed about how and to what extent the above mention theories of reading and several approaches to teach reading (whole language and phonics) approaches of reading has an impact on teachers who are required to implement these.

2.6 Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness which is one of the substantial cognitive skills for reading (Goswami & Bryant, 2010) refers to a child's ability to detect and manipulate the component sounds that comprise words (Goswami, 2006). It can be described in terms of syllable awareness, onset-rime awareness and phoneme awareness. The developmental sequence of phonological awareness emerges from the awareness of larger units, like syllables and onset-rimes, to awareness of individual phonemes in words (Gillon, 2004, p. 4-57). Such a developmental sequence has been demonstrated in a study by Anthony et al. (2003). That is, children generally master word-level skills before they master syllable-level skills, syllable-level skills before onset/rime-level skills, and onset/rime-level skills before phoneme-level skills, controlling for task complexity (p. 481). The term started to appear in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It has been reported as the most important cognitive skill for reading development (Goswami & Bryant, 2010). Numerous studies in the literature have claimed that early phonological awareness training has positive effect on children reading development in all languages as well as it enhances the phonemic awareness (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Goswami & Bryant, 2007; Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). This illustrated that a strong relationship exists between success on phonological awareness tasks and success with

reading. Children who are not good on phonological awareness tasks have problems with literacy attainments (Lewis & Ellis, 2006).

2.6.1 Issues related to phonological awareness

There have been controversial issues in the literature on phonological development and its relation to reading. Some of these include the developmental progression from large to small phonological units and the claim that there exists a causal link between phonological awareness and reading acquisition.

Awareness of syllable and rhymes develops prior to literacy across languages but awareness of the smallest units of sound symbolised by letters (called phonemes) varies with orthographic transparency. According to Goswami (2007) across the world's languages the primary phonological processing unit is the syllable but in languages like English the awareness of 'onset-rime' is an important level of phonological awareness for literacy acquisition (p. 125). Some emphasise the importance of onset and rime and provide the evidence that if the onset and rime units are highlighted in the words children learn to read more easily as opposed to other approaches in which emphasis is given on the phonemic constituents (Wise, Olson & Treiman, 1990). There is considerable support for the early experience of a child with syllables and onset and rime before they start to hear the smaller sound unit, given that it might have a considerable effect on his success later on in learning to read (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Glazzard & Stokoe, 2013). Awareness of the smallest units of sound (phonemes) symbolised by letters is called the phoneme awareness, which requires children to learn how phonemes correspond to their written form grapheme and to hear the smallest unit of sounds in words (Graham & Kelly, 2008). Phoneme awareness only develops once children are taught to read and write, irrespective of the age at which reading and writing is taught and it varies with orthographic transparency (Goswami & Bryant, 2010; Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). Children achieve awareness of phonemes rapidly in languages

where there is 1:1 mapping from letter to sound (for example Finnish, German). Phonemic awareness is slow in languages that lack one-to-one mapping from letters to sounds (for example English, French) (Goswami & Bryant, 2010).

However, in order to investigate whether there exist a causal link between units of phonological awareness and literacy acquisition, Castle and Coltheart (2004) re-assess the evidence provided by longitudinal and experimental research studies on phonological awareness skills and its influence on reading success. They concluded from the analysis that "no study has provided unequivocal evidence that there is a causal link from competence in phonological awareness to success in reading and spelling acquisition" (p. 77). However, Ziegler & Goswami (2005) argued that Castle and Coltheart (2004) were not able to find evidence for the causal hypothesis about phonological awareness because (a) "they had narrowed the focus to studies showing a causal link between phonemic awareness and literacy and (b) phonemic awareness must be demonstrated in pre-readers who do not know any letters". In Zeigler & Goswami's (2005) view, to access the phonemic awareness in preschoolers is not the right way to test the developmental hypothesis (p. 9). Moreover, it has been showed that link between phonological awareness and reading acquisition is found across languages for children.

2.6.2 Phonological complexity of the English language

A child's ability to understand the meaning from printed symbols can help to become a reader. The first step in gaining access to meaning is to learn the code that is used to represent speech of a culture. In English the system that a child needs to acquire for mapping distinctive visual symbols to units of sound is the alphabet. Different symbols systems (orthographies) have been invented in different languages for representing the spoken form. (Goswami, 2005-2007). For example, the English alphabetic system is different from the Chinese logographic system in which each orthographic symbol (character) represents one or

more words (morphemes). Instead in English the orthographic symbols (graphemes) whether one alphabet letter or a combination of letters, represents the sounds of speech (phonemes) (Morris, 1984). Hall (2006) called English alphabet a 'visual code' which in his point of view is difficult to crack because there is not just one letter for each sound. There are more phonemes than letters and every letter is used to represent different sounds for example the 't' in 'nation', 'native' and 'nature' (p. 16). The inconsistency of English letters and sounds makes learning to read English difficult than other languages with consistency. In English language there are no words with similar sounds pattern to the words like 'yatch', and 'people' (Goswami, 2005 & Zeigler & Goswami, 2005). Given this context Hall (2006) reported the relevance of whole word approach for these words and suggested that use of just only one method in English is inadequate (p. 16).

This analysis suggests that one of the constraints in the acquisition of reading is the phonological complexity of languages. Indeed, several studies have reported poor non-word reading scores in English language learners when doing comparisons with other languages. Wimmer and Goswami (1994) in their study used three reading tasks: a numeral reading task, a number word reading task and a nonsense word reading task to the Groups of 7, 8, and 9-year-old children who were learning to read in English and German. Non word reading was significantly slower in English but German children showed a big advantage while reading the non-words. Firth, Wimmer and Landerl (1998) also found poor non word reading by English speaking children than their German peers. The same conclusions were reported by Goswami, Gombert and deBarrera (1998) when doing comparisons of English with Spanish and French. This study will aim to find out how and to what extent these research conclusions and suggestions have an impact on teachers' pedagogical choices.

2.7 The role of the teacher in learning to read

"Every child deserves excellent reading teachers because teachers make a difference in children's reading achievement and motivation to read" (International Reading Association, 2000).

Teachers can develop reading skills in children by understanding that each child has individual needs, by delivering excellent reading instructions through a balanced approach. In an analysis of reading and reading instruction the US National Reading Panel (2000) involved teachers as one of the four interacting factors (students, tasks, materials, and teachers), who can contribute significantly in the reading development of children. According to Browne (1998) reading is a complex process which requires "knowledgeable practitioners who appreciate its complexity and are willing to take a flexible approach to teaching if it is to be taught well" (p. 1). The International Reading Association in reference to this provides a research-based description of several qualities of knowledge and practice that excellent reading teachers possess. These include the understanding of the process of reading development, use of appropriate pedagogical practices, knowledge of variety of ways to teach reading and the awareness of how and when to use and combine methods in their instructions. As it involves effective pedagogical practices, teachers need to be aware of the methods that would increase students' achievement. Educational literature has heightened the awareness that "Pedagogical subject knowledge is as important as the knowledge of the concepts, skills and understanding associated with specific subjects" (Glazzard & Stokoe, 2011, p. 31). Excellent reading teachers also share characteristics of good teachers in general. They have strong content and pedagogical knowledge, skills of classroom management, knowledge of motivational strategies and have high expectations for children's achievement (International Reading Association, 2000). Considerable progress has been made by researchers for reading

development and to solve the reading problems. In views of Moats and Foorman (2003) "the fruits of these scientific labours cannot be realized, however, unless teachers understand and are prepared to implement them". Research findings links teachers' knowledge of how to teach reading to their classroom practices (Browne, 1998). Browne (1998) argued that professionals, who spend lots of time teaching children to read, should need to think why reading is important. Going beyond the starting point of common sense teachers need to develop a deeper understanding of reading in order to teach all children to read whatever their experience (p. 1). The role of teacher can be challenging in that they need to have an awareness of the broader aspects of teaching and learning what separates them from non-professionals" (Browne, 1998, p. 2).

2.8 Professionalism of teachers in England

In order to understand how the government of England wanted to shape teacher professionalism and what form do they take, we need to first clarify what the term 'professionalism' means in respect to teachers.

2.8.1 Professionalism: a conceptual analysis

Professionalism is a contradictory and challenging concept to research, since the field is relatively under-researched and lacks a solid theoretical foundation (Avis, 2006; Kolsaker, 2008). It is, Kolsaker (2008) adds, 'inherently difficult to pinpoint the constitution and characteristics of professionalism'. A lack of consensus on the meaning of professionalism is acknowledged and in range of views (Humphreys & Hyland, 2002; Gewirtz et al., 2009; Nooredegraf, 2007) it is defined variously as: application of knowledge to specific cases, category of occupational classification, professional virtues, attitudes and behaviours to enhance trust, specialist knowledge and expertise, ethical codes, control and power. For Jarvis (1983) knowledge and application are the core component required for professional status. According to Evetts's (2012) analysis, however, professionalism is being imposed

from above rather than being agreed from within therefore the discourse (of dedicated service and autonomous decision making) is part of the appeal of professionalism, which is then used to promote and facilitate occupational change (p. 5-6). In case of teaching Webb et al. (2004) defined teacher professionalism as teachers' responsibility to control and develop their knowledge and actions for the benefit of clients. The struggle of teachers for professional recognition, the aspiration to have professional lives is not a given phenomenon but a contested one (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). For Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) professionalism refers to teachers' "rights and obligations to determine their own task in the classroom, that is, to the way in which teachers develop, negotiate, use and control their own knowledge" (p. 6). Webb, (2002) cited Goodland et al. (1990), who has highlighted the idea of what generally constitute a professional; a large degree of talent and skill, a body of knowledge to support their work and lastly autonomy to make decision.

2.9 Teachers' professional autonomy

Autonomy is at the heart of teacher professionalism that provides an individual both the decision making area to achieve one's aims and an effect on controlling the situations related to his/her work. It can refer to the independence of the profession from political control and practitioner's freedom to make decisions without external pressures in his/her day to day practice (ERIC, 1999; Hall, 1975). For Friedman, (1999) "Autonomy not only functions as a buffer against the pressures on teachers but also means of strengthening them in terms of personal and professional sense" (p. 73).

The "central area of tension within theory of teacher professionalism is the tension between teacher autonomy and the task assigned to teachers as professionals by the state" (Englund, 1996, p.75). Teaching is a democratically controlled profession, subject to standards and a degree of control (Goodlad, 1991 cited in Sweeney, 1994). It is often assumed that teachers' professionalism and their control over the curriculum are closely linked to each other. This

relationship has special resonance in the context of the educational system in England (Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996). Over the past several years there have been significant changes in the social and policy context of teaching. In England from 1940 to 1960 teachers enjoyed unprecedented autonomy over curriculum development and decision-making. Lawton (1980) has described this period as 'the Golden Age of teacher control of the curriculum' in Britain (Lawton, 1980, p. 22). In order to provide pedagogical freedom they were generally granted with a high degree of trust and autonomy. In 1963, it was suggested 'one of the major features of the English educational system has been the freedom assigned to teachers with regard to the planning and development of the curricula and methods in our school' (Educational Research, 1963). However, in 1970s teachers were blamed for not using licensed autonomy properly to the detriment of their pupils and society (Whitty, 2000). Teachers work world started to change in 1980s with the new curriculum industry, where teachers were spending more time in new curriculum work duties: planning, supervising and preparing the elements of the curriculum and assessment packages. During this period teacher autonomy was not sustainable, teaching was described as subject knowledge and teaching skills (Lawn, 1990, p. 391). This prescriptive nature of the state policies, telling teachers what to do and external standard setting has been considered contrary to the establishment of the teaching profession and teachers' empowerment (Porter, 1989, p. 345). The changing nature of teachers' work has implications for perceptions of the teacher's role as a 'professional'. As Bull (1988) stated that one of the major objectives and attractions of the movement to professionalize teaching is to provide genuine professional autonomy for teachers. It is asserted that such autonomy will provide the opportunity for teachers to exercise the best professional judgement in their instructions to the young. In short he said, teacher autonomy is significant to the improvement of education and also, inherent in the very nature of the professional teacher (pp. 4-5).

Within the broader context of teaching profession, the inclusion of teacher autonomy as a significant feature has been highly supported (Blasé & Kirby, 2000; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; MacBeath, 2012). Some argued in favour of teacher autonomy (Brundrett, 2013; Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell 2012; Ingersoll et al., 1997; Pearson & Hall, 1993). In the report of the Institute of Public Policy Research (Hallgarten & Johnson, 2001) the issue of teacher autonomy has been highlighted and seen as teachers having less rights of decision centred on curriculum and pedagogy. Advocates of rises in teacher autonomy argued that teachers can make better informed judgements about educational issues than state districts. Policy makers should provide greater recognition to teachers while making decisions as they are at the heart of educational system and more responsible for the success of decisions in the real life context (Brundrett, 2013; Ingersoll et al., 1997; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Porter (1989) also described that teachers' autonomy which can be attained by involving teachers in setting the standards for student achievement is the key to better teaching (p. 345).

The concept of autonomy has long been a topic of interest among practitioners and researchers in educational organizations, however in the literature, it is found to be an ambiguous concept to define (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Although, it is suggested to consider the nature of teacher autonomy as it is seen to be an important matter for education (Hoyle and John, 1995). Sweeney (1994) affirmed that "issues of teacher control and autonomy are anchored in quicksand" (p. 226). On one level policy makers and legislators do not consider all teachers equally capable, nor do they trust them to make appropriate decisions (Sweeney, 1994, p. 226). On other hand, in the process of child development teachers view themselves as artists, craft persons or professionals and desire for freedom to reach students. (Sweeney, 1994, p. 226). The picture that Sweeney (1994) sketched can be observed within the current context of educational reforms. Since the Coalition government (2010) took power, change has been apparent across the education system of England. To

address these changes at our disposal we have pointers; White Paper (2010) 'the importance of teaching' White Paper (2016) Educational Excellence Everywhere, Teacher Standards (2012). The Coalition's White Paper (2016) outlined the plan to bring change in education system and remould the teacher professionalism. On one side government is consistently focussing on the development of teacher autonomy (Department for Education (DfE, 2010; DfE, 2016) on the other hand in account to early reading there exists an expectation that all state schools use systematic synthetic phonics as first and foremost approach to teach reading to all children. Although politicians make commitments to more freedom to teachers and schools (Department for Education, 2010) but what is the lived experience of teachers, do they feel constrained by the output regulation? Do teachers really have this authority to make decisions using their own judgement? Are they actually allowed to exercise professional autonomy? To address these questions this study took one step further and explored teachers' perceptions in this regard.

2.10 Summary

After a brief description of the reading debate and historical background, the chapter has considered literature around reading theories and controversial issues relevant to various reading approaches. It has continued to place these issues in the context of England's political discourse which in turn has influenced the notions of teachers' professional autonomy.

Following a brief description of research on reading, here, it is argued that teachers' perspectives are valuable for the sake of children's reading achievement. Therefore, the current study set out to gain the first hand empirical evidence of teachers' practices in Reception and Key Stage 1 classes. The aim of doing so was to explore teachers' pedagogical beliefs about teaching of early reading and their professional autonomy. How would the distinctive contexts (government's education policies, league tables, achievement targets, and reading tests) influence teachers' pedagogical choices, curricular practices and their

autonomy to innovate? Such questions became the research focus of this present study. They also subsequently guided to answer the further questions in the methodology chapter, such as which research approach should be adopted? How teachers should be interviewed and their classes be observed to collect data? Details of the methodological decisions employed in this research are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter three: Methodology

3.1 Research paradigm

Social research is based on three basic elements known as ontology, epistemology and methodology. Within the research process the researcher investigates an area or topic of interest and explores the world of knowledge about that particular topic. The researcher approaches this world of knowledge with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 18). The net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be termed a 'paradigm' (Guba, 1990, p. 17). Gelson defined paradigm as a "framework or philosophy of science that makes assumptions about the nature of reality and truth, the kinds of questions to explore and how to go about doing so" (p. 5). The paradigmatic decision, the selection of methodology connected to that paradigm and also the choice of data collection methods are central elements of research. Before this study onset, there were a number of paradigm issues that needed consideration at that stage. These issues were vital to the understanding of the rationale behind the present research design. To know about the nature of reality - whether it was static or less opened to facts and figures - was an important step in the research process and these ontological considerations informed me about the choice of research paradigm.

3.2 Interpretative paradigm

Due to the theoretical view of teaching of reading and learning to read as social practice and constructive process, I chose to locate this study in the interpretive paradigm. In considering the ontological stance and exploratory nature of research questions, my intention was to explore a reality which is socially constructed, allied to participants' experiences, interpretations and perceptions of the world around them. Within the interpretative paradigm the aim of this study was not to reach any definite conclusions. Instead, I interpreted the

reality as a construct of participants' viewpoints and experiences of the real context. As Bryman (2012) illustrated "social entities can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors" (p. 32-33).

The rationale behind setting this study within the interpretive paradigm was to get a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions of professional autonomy and their pedagogical knowledge for teaching early reading. Therefore, a normative paradigm (positivist) which deals with statistics was not appropriate due to the exploratory nature of the current research questions and aims. Each of the paradigm addressed different issues, so at this stance, a brief comparison of normative and interpretative paradigm will assist to justify the selection and preference of interpretative paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) described that in relation to theory, the way normative researchers validate theories of human behaviour through complex methodologies push them further from the experience and understanding of the everyday reality of world. This everyday reality is external to the actors and apparent in the society. The aim which is crucial in normative research is to ascertain a comprehensive 'rational edifice', a universal theory and to account for human social behaviour (p. 18). Contrary to the normative paradigm, interpretive research is characterised by a concern for the individual, in order to understand their interpretations of the world around them. In relation to theory, it emerges from the collection and analysis of data and should not precede research but follow it. The theory becomes sets of meanings which yield insight and understanding of people's behaviour. These theories are likely to be as diverse as the sets of human meanings and understanding that they are to explain (Cohen et al., 2011 & Bryman, 2012). Succinctly, the comparison of two of the paradigms indicated that the normative paradigm might not accomplish the aims of present research as its purpose was not to test a theory or hypothesis. Instead it was concerned with participants' perceptions and meanings of the phenomenon.

3.3 Social constructivism

With regard to research in teaching, I believe that knowledge is socially constructed and is created through interaction between the individual and the world. Social constructivism is part of a tradition labelled as constructionist or constructivist. This epistemological stance asserts that people make their own reality by seeking understanding and experiences of the world they live and work in. The meanings individuals develop towards different objects of the world are varied and multiple. Through these multiple meanings the researcher can look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas (Miller & Brewer, 2003; Creswell, 2013). In line with the above discussion, a constructivist approach seemed suitable for this study where my role was to understand multiple meanings that teachers hold and to explore the realities of teachers' beliefs and practices. This research was conducted in the natural setting of a school that enabled me to depict the picture of a real situation. In relation to social constructivism it was expected that after the implementation of the national curriculum (2013) different teachers would develop various meanings and views about the curriculum and their right to innovate in their pedagogical decisions. This action of innovation depends upon the factors of professional knowledge and individual experiences of the place they worked in. Being an outsider, I intended to gain insights into these multiple meanings and experiences.

The rationale behind adopting a social constructionist approach was the use of open-ended questions as Creswell (2014) argued that in a social constructivist approach "questions become broad and general so that participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons" (p. 24). Open ended questioning led to a careful listening and observation of what teachers as participants of this enquiry said and did in their professional settings. " In recent years the term social constructionism has also come to include the notion that researchers' own account of the

social world are constructions" (Bryman, 2012, p. 33). Through this exploration, I was able to construct new knowledge drawing upon my own acquaintance of literature along with data collected. I held the point in consideration when collecting data that in terms of reality there was nothing right or wrong. As Miller and Brewer (2003) stated "there are no universal laws external to human interaction waiting to be discovered" (p. 41). So what was crucial in this research was to generate new knowledge, the one which was 'jointly/co-constructed' by the researcher and the participants.

3.4 Case study research design

Educational problems and processes can be scrutinized to gain an understanding which in turn can influence and perhaps even improve practice. According to Merriam (1988) case study plays an important role for studying educational processes, for evaluating programmes and informing policy. It focuses on real-life situations, offers insights and elucidates meanings that expand its readers' experiences. Case study as a whole is an appealing design for applied fields of study such as education (p. 32). Yin (2009) described that 'case study provides a unique example of real people in real situation, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles (p. 72). By taking account of Merriam (1988), Stake (1995), Yin (2009) and Denzin and Lincoln (2008) a qualitative case study research design was preferred. The rationale behind conducting this research in school was to explore the aspects of teachers' pedagogical knowledge, practices and their professional autonomy in the light of their interpretations of reality. According to the present epistemological stand point (social constructivism) the case study approach was preferred over other methods of enquiry. It started in the 'world of action and contribute to it'. The insights gain from this case study can be used for individual self-development, formative evaluation and in educational policy making (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 292).

3.4.1 An Instrumental single case study

This research is an example of instrumental case study, accomplishing something other than understanding the context of this particular school (Stake, 1995, p. 3). Within the instrumental case study, "the case was of secondary interest, it played a supportive role and it facilitates our understanding of something else. The case still was looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized and its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helped to pursue the external interest" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 123). In this context, it became possible to broadly look at the influence of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their pedagogical practices on the reading development of children.

3.4.2 Generalization from the case study

Qualitative case study inquiry was inductive focusing on process, understanding, and interpretation rather than deductive and experimental….generalizations, concepts or hypothesis emerged from an examination of the data (Merriam, 1988, p. 13-21). An instrumental case study was examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. Generalization in case study is something which is questioned persistently. Like experiments, this case study relied on analytical generalization which means generalization to theory (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p. 23). According to Stake (1995) the purpose of a case study is to make the case understandable, readers take less interest in generalization from the case. In other ways readers already know other cases; they will add this one in and learn what is general from a case study (p. 85). As Yin (2009) argued that case studies are generalizable to theoretical proposition and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a "sample" and in doing a case study, the goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization) (Yin, 2009, p.15).

Data based on teachers' interpretations built up a theory related to teachers' pedagogical knowledge and autonomy for teaching early reading. In turn it can be used by other researchers or educational policy makers interested in same topic. The topic of teaching primary reading and phonics has been observed and analysed many times in literature. After the implementation of the new primary curriculum (DfE, 2013), the exploration of teachers' perceptions of various methods of teaching early reading and their views about professional autonomy will create a new direction in research. This 'revelatory nature' of current research (Yin, 2009) justified the conduct for this single case study.

3.5 Research setting and sampling

"Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4). This case study was conducted in the natural setting of a school in England which was smaller than the average primary school. The school mostly consisted of pupils from White British or other White heritage, and others were from a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities and for whom English was an additional language was below average. Riley (1999) stated that "primary schools and in particular, the early years of education are key to the success of any literacy drive" (p. 6). Taking the aims of this research into consideration and in accordance of my understanding of Riley's (1999) point of view, Early Years and Key Stage 1 seemed appropriate as a research site. To gain access to the research site was a difficult and long process. I visited many schools and had informal conversations with head teachers so that I could inform them about my research and discuss the matter of school access. Many of the schools showed their concerns about the busy schedule and expressed concerns that teachers had no time for interviews and observations of their classes. The meeting with one head teacher went successfully and consequently I was given access. While trying to gain access I

was intending to select a state school where quality teaching of reading is provided. The rationale behind selecting a state school was to observe the extent to which the new National Curriculum was providing teachers with professional autonomy in the teaching of reading and the impact of this curriculum on the teaching practices of teachers. In the natural setting of school it became possible to fulfil the twofold aim of this research; first to gain general understanding of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and its relationship with their practices and secondly to explore the level of freedom teachers possessed in teaching early reading. After gaining the access to a school the next concern was to meet teachers. As Walford (2001) suggested, gaining permission to enter the research site is not total; the researcher needs to get further access to observe classrooms and interview teachers. So I established positive relationships with teachers so that they could trust me and be honest and open about their responses in the interview.

3.5.1 Sampling

In terms of sampling within the qualitative case study a deliberative sampling strategy i.e. purposive sampling was chosen. This means sampling in a deliberate way with some purpose or focus in mind (Punch, 2009, p. 162). Cohen et al. (2011) noted that "the main concern in such sampling was not to gain generalizability but to gain information from those who are in a position to give it" (p. 157). Random sampling was inappropriate here because the purpose of this study was not to generate a sample which was representative and then to drew generalization to other contexts but to explore the central phenomenon by learning from those who could provide rich information and helped to understand the interest of this study. The qualitative nature of this study made it essential to select a sample which was experiencing a real situation in a real context. At the sampling stage within the school, Early Years and Key Stage 1 teachers were selected as participants of this research. In this research while exploring the teaching of early reading the 'Phonics Screening Check' was considered as a

significant aspect with regard to teachers' autonomy. It was expected that this sample could best describe their perceptions about the test and it could also investigate how free teachers felt themselves when preparing children for phonics screening test. The aim of the research made it necessary to explore teachers' perceptions about both aspects of the new curriculum; word recognition and comprehension. The purpose was to explore which different strategies teachers used for teaching word recognition and comprehension. Early Years and Key Stage 1 teachers are the individuals who play a vital role in the development of children's reading ability so in selecting them as a sample it was anticipated that they would help to explore the above mentioned purpose and gain insights into the specific interest of this research. The sample of current study comprised of 3 Early Years and 8 Key Stage 1 teachers so making the total of 11. The sample was not big enough but the participants provided detailed and in depth information about teaching of early reading and helped to learn the most from this. The following table provide personal detail of the participants.

NO	Pseudonym	Gender	Qualification	Training/Instructional Programmes attended	No of teaching years
1	Nikki	Female	B.Ed. (Hons)	Reading programme of how children learn to read (Institute of Education)	12
2	Susan	Female	Certificate of Education		Since 1978 not always full time
3	Rachel	Female	PGCE, B.sc (Hons)		10
4	Maria	Female	PGCE (Masters Level)	Writing and reading leader meetings each term. Phonics International training (2012) Letters and Sounds training (2009)	9
5	Karon	Female	B.Ed. (Hons)		22
6	Lucy	Female	Post Graduate in Early Years and Primary Education		4
7	Julia	Female	B.Ed. (Hons)	Literacy hour training (1998)	24
8	Sarah	Female	NPQH, PGCE, B.sc (Hons)	Reading recovery update programme	30
9	Maya	Female	BA (Hons) Media, PGCE (Masters Level) Primary Education (QTS)	Guided group reading training	11
10	Olivia	Female	BA (Hons) Primary Education	Phonics training and Reading Recovery Scheme	NQT
11	Jan	Female	B.Ed. (Hons)		12

Table: 3.1 Teachers' personal details

3.6 Research methods

A major strength of case study data collection described by Yin (2009) is to use different sources of evidence to make the study findings and conclusions more convincing and accurate (p.114-116). In case study research, evidence can be collected from many sources: documentation, archival records, interviews, observations and physical artefacts. Each source is related with the collection of data but not all sources will be relevant to all case studies. Due to the complexity of the human behaviour various methods have been used in social sciences research and the approach to use individual sources of evidence is not recommended for the conduct of case studies (Yin, 2009). Within this case study, in the context of teaching of early reading, Early Years and Key Stage 1 teachers' 'verbal expressions, 'disposition to action' and teaching behaviour were included by adopting qualitative methods of data collection (Pajares, 1992, cited in Poulson et al., 2001, p. 274). Due to the exploratory nature of current research semi-structured interviews which are an essential source of case study evidence seemed appropriate. Being an outsider researcher, I decided to use interview approach so that I could gain in-depth knowledge. To triangulate interviewees' responses through another source and to get evidence of what participants actually did in classrooms, I supplemented interviews with direct observation. The natural setting of the school where this study took place provided a chance for direct observation and allowed me to explore the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in terms of teaching of early reading. According to Newby (2010) there is evidence that 'what we see influences our judgements more than what we hear and the flexible nature of observational approach merges it easily into other methods of data collection (p. 360). Observational evidence alongside interviews' responses was useful in gaining further information about the research topic, understanding the context being studied and checking the reliability and validity of the data. Moreover, through direct observation I was able to access information that teachers may have been

unwilling to mention in the interview. The combination of interviews with observation is supported by researchers such as Miller and Les Back (2012) who stated that "how people legitimate their actions is significant which suggests that placed alongside direct observation the interview may have a role to play" (Miller & Les Back 2012, pp. 14-31).

3.6.1 Qualitative interviews

Interviews are generally the most widely employed method of collecting qualitative data. The most common form of interview is a person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from the other person. It provides a framework in which respondents can express their own thoughts in their words (Bryman, 2012; Merriam, 1988; Cohen et al., 2011; Miller & Brewer, 2003). Interviews are formed of many types, ranging from the structured to semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured and formal type of interview entails mostly the same questions in the same order to test hypothesis, to produce quantitative data and is amenable to quantification or statistical analysis. Conversely, unstructured and in-depth interviews are a means of collecting qualitative data with no set of predetermined questions. While conducting in-depth interviews, the interviewer spends time in an 'unstructured mode' so that insight and understanding can be obtained and new information can emerge (Merriam, 1988, pp. 73-74).

3.6.2 The semi-structured interview

The third type is the semi-structured and informal interview whose purpose is "to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of described phenomena" (Kvale, 1996, pp. 5-6). During the first phase of data collection semi-structured interviews were conducted with the aim of generating first-hand in depth informative data. The rationale behind using interviews as a main research instrument was to explore participants' pedagogical knowledge for teaching early reading. Due to the exploratory concerns this research demanded a flexible type of interview. While conducting

semi structured interviews I kept Miller's and Brewer's (2003) words into consideration that this flexibility could give me the advantage to "ask questions on the spot, change the order of questions, follow up interesting leads and allow respondents varying levels of control during the interaction" (p. 168). The choice of semi-structured interview was also based on the concerns that it would provide plenty of time to teachers to express their views therefore they could also include their personal experiences in the responses.

3.6.3 Interview protocol

The interview protocol (see appendix 1) was designed on the basis of theoretical ideas derived from the literature review and the policy documents (DfE, 2012, & DfE, 2010, 2016). The first set of questions was designed to probe teachers' deep pedagogical knowledge which involved knowledge of the developmental theories of reading, the processes, techniques and methods adopted in the classroom for teaching early reading. The interview protocol was planned with the expectation that teachers' pedagogical knowledge for teaching early reading would involve knowledge of skills necessary, phonological knowledge, knowledge for assessing early reading and knowledge of several approaches for teaching early reading. The second set of questions focused probing teachers' pedagogical practices. They were asked to express their views about the role of phonics and several approaches of teaching reading. The last part of the protocol was based on the issue of teachers' professional autonomy and the pressures they faced while teaching early reading.

3.6.4 Piloting of the interview

In order to find out any drawbacks in the interview questions, a pilot interview was run. The interview protocol was piloted with one of the teachers who was not included in the sample of the study. The piloting process deemed helpful as it identified some of the questions which were not useful and closely related to the study, therefore providing the opportunities to change or rephrase the questions.

3.6.5 Procedure

As a key instrument of this qualitative research I went into the field myself and asked open ended questions to the participants using a number of probes in order to gain deep understanding of their standpoints (Creswell, 2014, p. 45). This "naturalistic", direct experience of face to face interviews provided the opportunity to establish affinity with teachers and understand their experiences. Every potential participant was contacted to introduce the research project. Once consent from teachers was gained, they were informed about the significance of their involvement, their willingness to participate in the study and the issue of their confidentiality. Each interview lasted for 40-50 minutes. With the consent of participants all the interviews were audio- recorded along with note-taking. The reason for recording the interviews was the intention of accessing interviewees' interpretations any time during the analysis stage. Interviews were conducted in a flexible mode, by focusing on predetermined broad issues. The interviews questions were open-ended in order to elicit information about interviewees' perceptions of the topics depicted by the researcher. They were invited to interpret their views about the skills required for the teaching of early reading and skills required for children to learn to read. In order to explore how teachers understand the reading process I considered Goodacre's (1971) suggestion; it may be necessary for most teachers to be aware of specific instances of children's difficulties and various ways to help certain types of readers; to read and collect information from research about the stages of learning to read; to differentiate levels of difficulties within the complex process (p.11). Furthermore, their understanding of the alphabetic code, blending and segmenting, vocabulary development, phonological awareness, shared and guided reading was investigated. The rationale for adopting interviews was also to probe which skills teachers know a child needs to develop to become a good reader. Questions were asked to explore teachers' perceptions about the strategies they used to develop word recognition,

comprehension, fluency and vocabulary development. At the end teachers' perceptions were explored about the level of autonomy they felt they had, especially after the implementation of the new curriculum (DfE, 2013). Questions were asked about the Year 1 Phonic Screening Check and also their choice of phonics approach (synthetic phonics, analytic phonics) while planning the lessons. By conducting interview which is the main road to multiple realities, I tried to discover and portray the multiple views of this case (Stake, 1995, p. 64). Freedom was given to the teachers if they wanted to discuss an issue which was not been covered by the research questions. The rationale for choosing semi-structured interview as a research instrument was the anticipation that the upshot of the interview will reflect the deep perceptions of teachers.

Interviews are mostly surrounded by three main areas of ethical issues; informed consent, confidentiality and consequences of the research (Kvale, 1996, pp. 111-20). In terms of confidentiality, the real name of the school and participants' names were not mentioned in the research documents. The research data and end-product will only be utilized for educational purposes. Validity of data was provided 'by using mechanical means to record, store and retrieve data, by complete and balanced representation of multiple realities and sophisticated understanding of a situation by making the familiar strange (Cohen et al., 2011, pp. 184-185).

3.6.6 Observation

The second phase of data collection was observation. According to Merriam (1988);

> Interviews are primary source of data in doing case study research; so too are observations. It gives a first-hand account of the situation under study and, when combined with interviewing and document analysis, allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated.

<div align="right">(Merriam, 1988, p. 102)</div>

A structured observation will already have its hypotheses decided and will use the observational data to conform or refute these hypotheses. Conversely, a semi-structured and, more particularly, an unstructured observation, will be hypothesis-generating rather than hypothesis-testing. The semi-structured and unstructured observations will review observational data before suggesting an explanation for the phenomena being observed (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 457).

The aim of this case study research, accentuated the semi-structured type of overt observation in natural settings. During observations attention was paid to some particular issues allied to this research but with open-ended focus. Once I gained familiarity with the setting, my position was of a non-participant observer in the need to commence serious data collection. At this phase of research, I preferred to scribble down more field notes. According to my information some parents used to come to the school to assist teachers and children in routine activities. So, my position in the class did not divert children's attention as they were used to of different people coming in the class other than the teacher. Some of the teachers also informed children that I was studying about reading and wanted to observe how good children could read. The rationale for using this method was to amplify the understanding of the issues that need to explore in detail. Observation of the 'first hand context' allowed me to explore the process of teaching reading in Early Years and Key Stage 1 classes. It enabled me to understand how teachers teach reading and how they had embraced the opportunity of freedom in their pedagogical practices. Through observation I gained insights of teachers' perceptions and viewpoints in the setting of their actions. Most importantly, the observations of teachers' practices allowed me to access or unfold the issues that they didn't interpret in the interviews.

3.6.7 Observation checklist

An observation checklist was used during my school visits (see in Appendix 2). The checklist was designed in accordance with my research questions and based partly on my understanding of the reading pedagogy. The reason for using an observation checklist was to note teachers' pedagogical practices, classroom activities for reading development, teachers' role in the class and the skills used by teachers to develop a literacy environment. The observation checklist covered a number of aspects in relation to the research questions and it was used by giving a tick to each point. The elements of interview protocol were addressed in the observation protocol so as to verify teachers' responses in the interview.

3.6.8 Procedure

The observations were conducted in all Reception, Year1 and Year 2 classes. The teachers who participated in the interview were observed after the interviews had taken place. Therefore, teachers provided appointments for me to conduct observations of their classes so minimising the risk of interrupting their schedule. Each teacher was observed for 30-50 (mins) while teaching reading including whole class session, individual and group reading. According to my research plan I intended to observe each teacher twice. A total of 14 observations were conducted although it was not possible to carry out two observations of all the teachers. The reason for observing all classes was to understand various teachers' knowledge and expertise. I observed different activities and behaviours that teachers adopted when teaching reading in classes. Teachers' voices were recorded during the observations, which I listened to later in order to clarify the record. I tried to complete the observation checklist as much as possible during the observation. While conducting observations in classes I made filled notes in my research dairy. I took notes about the topic which was being taught, how it was taught, the classroom environment and management, the strategies used in the class to teach reading and the level of children's involvement in the class. I noted

additional observations in the field notes which occurred, but were not part of the observation schedule. As soon as I left the field, detailed field notes were written. After each observation the issues that I felt need more information or clarifications were discussed with teachers in an informal meeting.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data in this study were analysed qualitatively. It is indicated in educational research that qualitative data can be analysed and interpreted in various ways. According to Cohen et al. (2011) the process of data analysis involves "accounting for and explaining the data; in short making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes and categories" (p. 537). These several components of data analysis require the researcher to have the knowledge of how to make sense of data in order to represent and interpret it. Creswell (2014) suggested qualitative researchers need to adapt the specific types of strategies for data analysis (p. 191).

3.7.1 Thematic analysis

In line with Creswell's (2014) suggestion, a qualitative analytic method 'thematic analysis' as a categorizing strategy was adapted which in view of Braun and Clarke (2006) is a foundational method for qualitative analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes the data set in (rich) detail. However, it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). The authors compare thematic analysis with other approaches like discourse analysis, narrative analysis and grounded theory analysis and concluded that 'these different methods share a search for certain themes or patterns across an (entire) data set' so more or less they overlap with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 8). At theoretical level, the analysis of the data began with the first interview and observation. As Stake (1995) and Merriam,

(1988) stated that analysis in a case study research is an 'on-going process' with no particular starting or ending points. The purpose is to give meaning to the first impressions and final complications too. In order to search for pattern of meanings across the data set, analysis of the data will be developed by following the steps that Braun and Clarke (2006) described. At an early stage of this qualitative analysis I organized and managed the raw data according to the logical chronology of this case (Merriam, 1988, p. 145). Detailed below were the steps of analysis that I followed.

3.7.2 Transcribing the data

Transcription is the process of converting audio recordings and field notes into a form of text data so that it can be manipulated. I started transcribing the recorded interviews by myself. Although it was a time consuming activity it provided the best opportunity to familiarize myself with the data. In order to immerse myself in the data and develop a detailed understanding of it I listened the recordings several times. The field notes that I noted during the class room observation of teachers were typed and saved in the text files for analysis. These transcripts, field notes and information about teachers and school (name and contact details) were stored in my personal password protected computer. After the phase of documentation I divided the interview data manually under the headings of interview protocol (teachers' pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical practices and teachers' autonomy in teaching reading) which was helpful in gaining the initial sense of teachers' responses. The phase of transcribing and separating the data resulted in generating a number of ideas about what is interesting in the data with regard to this research.

3.7.3 Initial coding

At a practical level, the process of coding started right after the first interview or observation because the "first data served as a foundation for further data collection and analysis....less need to go back to find the missing links" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.160). In order to

analyse the data in a meaningful manner I began the process of coding manually, while trying to give attention to each part of data and retain the full information. I coded the data by highlighting the meaningful words and sentences, by writing notes and memos on the text of transcripts. I re-read the transcripts second time carefully, used every single sentence to assign codes and if there was no code for individual sentences I sometimes assigned an open code to the whole paragraph. I tried to find differences and similarities in the data and then open code the text accordingly. In order to develop effective codes a verbatim technique was adopted by reporting actual and direct sentences. As said by Cohen et al. (2011) verbatim conversations are "illuminative and direct than the researcher's own words" and they are "rich in data and detail" (p. 539). Transcripts were given a close reading many times, making notes of more comments and ideas in order to analyse the data in a rigorous manner. Once I coded all the text, codes were separated under the interview protocol headings. After identifying as many codes as possible I went through the codes, compared them and modified the existing codes which helped to finalise this systematic coding process for interpretative analysis. The aim of the research was to explore teachers' perspectives about their professional autonomy and impact of their subject knowledge on children's ability to read. While establishing codes and categories attention was paid to the issue that concepts in categories relate to the research theoretical perspective and context of the study (Creswell, 2014, p. 192).

3.7.4 Emergence of themes

According to Creswell (2014) "the use of themes is another way to analyse qualitative data because themes are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the data-base, they form a core element in qualitative data analysis" (p. 248).

Having a long list of different initial codes that I had identified across the data set, this stage of analysis aimed to sort the codes into broader themes. I started to analyse the codes and

consider how different codes under each heading could be combined to make an overarching theme. I did mind-mapping in order to organise the codes into themes. However, it was a difficult stage of analysis as it was hard to produce such themes that could fit in the data and interpret it in a clear way. Sometimes a code looked like a main theme or different codes did not fit anywhere in themes. While reviewing the themes, I combined some of the themes together some were separated, refined or discarded. I read and reviewed all the extracts from data that match with each theme. The purpose of reviewing was to find some more codes if they were missed in the initial coding stage. The findings of the data were analysed on the basis of emerging themes. By providing detailed description of the data these themes helped to gain insights into teachers' perceptions of several methods for teaching reading and their professional autonomy. The rationale of developing themes in analysis was to interpret the meaning of the data and it presented the perspectives of teachers. In the process of analysis new data was compared with the existing data so that the categories achieve a perfect fit with the data (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 600). By comparing, refining, reducing and interlinking these themes, I tried to find few big themes so that data can be summarized.

3.8 Credibility

In the process of data collection and analysis, I needed to make sure that the 'building blocks' of analysis and the findings and interpretation were accurate and evident (Newby 2010, & Creswell, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested credibility as an alternative criterion to validity for qualitative research. Strategies that determine credibility of the accuracy of the findings are 'member checking' 'triangulation' 'prolonged engagement' and 'persistent observation'. Therefore, by adopting the 'member checking' strategy the participating were asked whether the interpretations of the findings were complete and fair. Credibility measures were also met through triangulating the data collection methods and piloting the interview protocol before the actual data collection.

3.9 Ethical considerations

One of the salient milestones towards my research was to gain ethical approval from the ethics committee of the University. In order to obtain this approval, I needed to be fully aware of the ethical guidelines specified by the University Research Ethics Committee and the British Education Research Association (BERA, 2011). In the light of these guidelines, consideration was given to the ethical issues involved in conducting this study. Consequently, I assured participants that the research was ethically approved by the University which could further "assist to earn participants' confidence, establish rapport and address any reservations they might have about answering research questions" (Silverman, 2010, p. 154).

Within the interpretative research ethical issues are strongly emphasised. Silverman (2010) indicated that qualitative research involves contact with human subjects in the field so 'ethical problems are not usually far'. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) also suggested that as a guest in the private field "researchers' manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 140). In accordance with these recommendations ethical issues were considered significantly at every stage of research by acting as ethically as I could. In the light of BERA (2011) guidelines, ethical considerations pertinent to the present study, included; gaining access to the research site, getting consent about voluntary involvement of participants, confidentiality of data, anonymity, protection and respect of participants. Much effort was made not only to follow the ethical guidelines stringently but to disseminate the research information to all participants.

Participants have the right to be well-informed about the aims and objectives of research. To give a clear idea about the research, I met each prospective participant individually and informed consent was gained prior to observations and interviews. Participants were asked to sign a consent form. The purpose of informed consent was to give as much information as possible about the research so that participants have the freedom to make their own informed

decisions about their involvement in the study. I provided opportunities to the teachers to ask questions pertinent to the project before and throughout the research. Furthermore, they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

One of the primary objectives of social science research 'doing no harm' applies differently to different research contexts. In case study research it is suggested that researcher must not misuse information collected as data and avoid deception while reporting. Participants' wellbeing and interest should be respected. Research should inform the participants in advance that their participation is voluntary and it will not place them at risk (Creswell, 2014; Simons, 2009 & Silverman, 2010). Cohen et al., (2011) used the term 'betrayal' in such occasions where data disclosed in confidence is revealed publicly in such a way as to cause embarrassment, anxiety or perhaps suffering to a subject or participant disclosing the information. It is a breach of trust and is often a consequence of selfish motives of either a personal or professional nature (p. 94). By giving attention to these ethical issues, confidentiality of data and anonymity of respondents were taken into account seriously. Anonymity was retained by using pseudonyms instead of participants' real names. I gave guarantees to them that all audio recordings consisting research data were kept under lock and key and data were only shared with the University research staff. No attempts were made to alter or modify participants' responses. In order to protect participants' interests some of the interview transcripts were given back to them for confirmation of their view points.

3.10 Summary

In this chapter I introduced and discussed all the steps of decision making with regard to the methodology. The choice of case study approach as a suitable research design, data collection stages including sampling and ethical issues are explained in great detail. The following chapter presents the findings from interviews and observations data collection instruments.

Chapter four: Interpretation of the interview and observation findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data gathered from 11 semi-structured interviews as well as 14 observations of reading lessons delivered by the participants who partook in this qualitative case study research. The interviews as mentioned in the previous chapter were comprised of open ended questions and the rationale behind conducting these interviews was to explore the nature of teachers' pedagogical knowledge for teaching early reading and the freedom they have been given by government in the presence of strict accountability measures and the pressures of national testing. The discussion of the observation findings involved teachers' instructional behaviours and the teaching strategies that characterised their teaching practices. Seven of the eleven teachers agreed to be observed twice so in total 14 observations were conducted. Finally, the instruments of semi-structured interview and observation helped to explore teachers' pedagogical knowledge that underpins their pedagogical practices in teaching early reading. Pedagogical practices are the strategies which teachers used in their classes for teaching reading.

4.2 Brief description of data analysis procedure

Before I present the findings of the interviews and class room observations this part of the thesis will outline the analysis procedure of the data collected for this study.
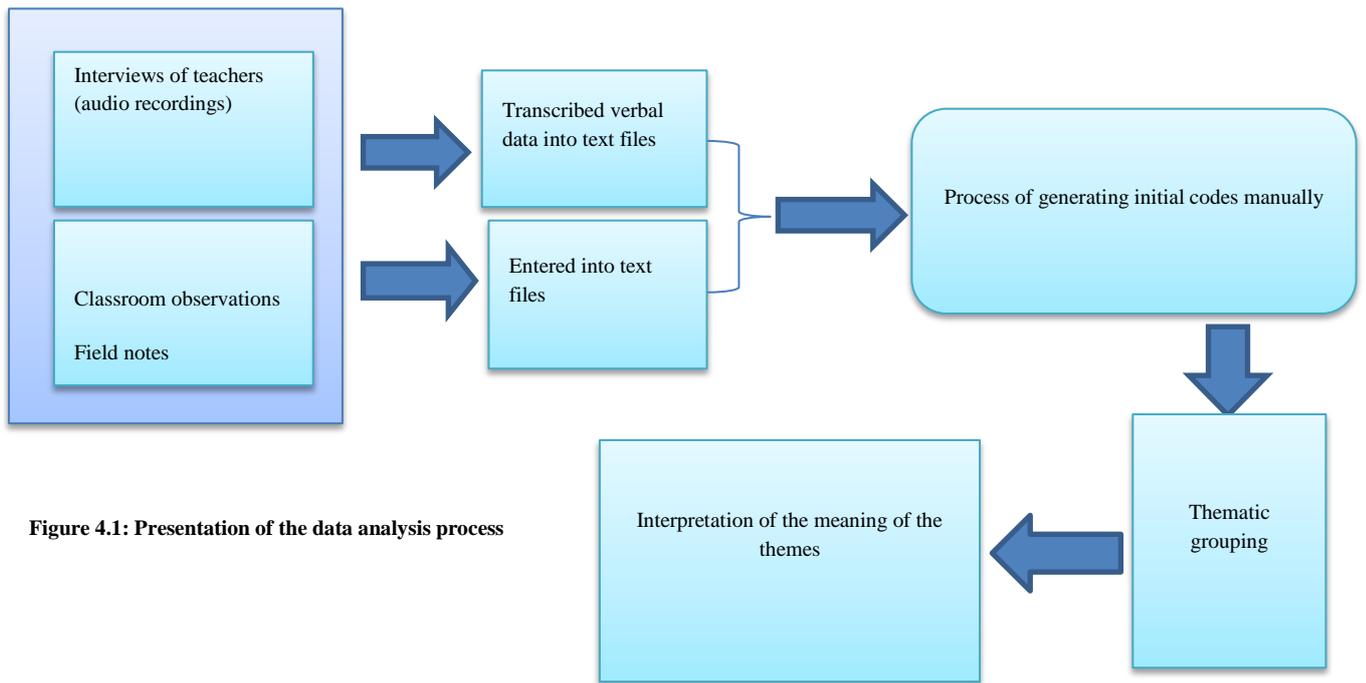
Figure 4.1: Presentation of the data analysis process

Following the process of thematic analysis, the table below presents the themes, subthemes, theme descriptions and the number of teachers' comments matched with these themes and sources from which references were collected.

Theme	subthemes	Theme explanation	Number of extracts matched with theme	Citations from
Reading as a whole set of several skills	Phonics as one of several reading strategies Reading for meaning and enjoyment	Refers to teachers' comments about the skills required for childrens' reading development	38	Interview data Observation data
Assessment and accountability	Strategies used by teachers to assess children reading ability	Refers to teachers' comments about assessment of early reading	41	Interview data Observation data
	Testing system of government			
The journey to meet curriculum objective		Refers to teachers comments about what they felt about the curriculum	28	Interview data Observation data
Teaching practices	Classroom environment Activating prior knowledge Teaching strategies	Refers to teachers' comments and their classroom practices to explore which strategies they use to teach reading.	56	Interview data Observation data
Teacher's role in the context of early reading		Refers to teachers' comments and classroom observations to explore their role in teaching reading.	30	Interview data
Challenges and pressures faced by teachers in teaching reading			40	Interview data

Figure 4.2: A sample of themes, sub themes, theme description, number of comments matched to each theme and the source of data.

4.3 Data findings from interviews and observations

The data presented in this section will interpret the Early Years and Key Stage 1 teachers' perceptions related to the teaching of early reading and will explore the relationship between their practices and pedagogical perceptions. Taking into account the policy mandates this chapter will demonstrate how the context and teachers' viewpoints- discussed in the themes- influence their teaching practices. By considering these aspects, the following themes will present a detailed description of the interview and observation findings.

4.4 Reading as a whole set of several skills

The teachers who responded to the interviews were inclined to focus on a range of skills that they believed help children in learning to read. As Sarah and Julia said:

> *Particularly for reading, I think the teacher needs to understand that children learn to read in different ways (Participant 8, Sarah).*
>
> *Some children learn by phonics, some children learn by reading the whole word, some children rely on the pictures more heavily to begin with the batman support (participant 7, Julia).*

Given the existing pressure of phonics teaching Maya interpreted her beliefs about approaching reading through several skills;

> *Clearly, in teacher training, a strong emphasis is placed on teaching phonics and that has to be observed and has to be passed. But I know for some children understanding word shapes may be a better way to learn to read, so, that would be the decoding strategy but reading is so much more than that. It is about enjoying books, it's about recognizing the purpose to reading, it's about reading for meaning not just reading to decode words (Participant 9, Maya).*

Another Year 2 teacher Olivia had got qualified teacher status recently and had been involved in phonics training courses. Through her responses this study revealed that alongside teachers' professional development teaching experience matters a lot as they get more involved in the classes their pedagogical perceptions change. Olivia said in her classroom she is learning new ways in which children can learn to read. she talked about the importance of sight reading in early stages of reading development.

> *Especially I had one child who is EAL and has not been to school before and she has actually learnt to read from the sight rather than the phonics sounds. She has missed out on that reception and Year 1 and phonics that all the other kids learn to read, so it kind of show me it can be done in both ways. Because, this child will eventually read the words, she learnt them and once she learn them she can read them (Participant 10, Olivia).*

During observations I observed in Olivia's class that she mostly used the synthetic phonics approach for teaching reading. She also expressed in her responses that she has used a lot of her University reading lessons and Jolly Phonics in her class. Her experience of working with EAL children in this school brought a change in her perceptions about several approaches and this showed me the impact of experience on her pedagogical practice. As Olivia became more experienced she explored new ways of teaching reading. There were lots of children in the school who spoke English as an additional language so sight reading was one of the strategies that seemed to be working with EAL children. Maria a Year 1 teacher also talked about this:

> *We have children from second language and they have the sight vocabulary and they can*
> *still learn to read without being able to decode phonics so having an appreciation not*
> *every child is going to learn in the same way (Participant 4, Maria).*

In this school where Jolly Phonics, Letters and Sounds and Phonics International synthetic phonics programmes were used for teaching reading, teachers also spoke about and were observed encouraging children for using contextual and pictorial cues in their reading. Data from Susan who had been teaching since 1978 with a Certificate in Education, without any training in any phonics programme indicated the importance of teaching children to use a wide range of strategies to support reading development. This signified the importance of approaching reading through other approaches besides phonics.

The following extract illustrate her point of views:

> *You need to help them to realize that the picture gives the cues. You need to tell them how*
> *to track the text from left to right, the letters become words and words give meaning, but to*
> *start with they can read a story from some pictures they don't actually have to have the*
> *ability to read (Participant 2, Susan).*

Teachers stated that they taught the content as a whole class and if they felt a child is not progressing then extra support will be provided to the child. Precision teaching is one of the strategies adopted by teachers for less able readers in which children practised reading a list

of words each day until they were able to read them. They have intervention groups for reading where children received more focused teaching in accordance with their needs. In the Reception class some of the teachers were satisfied with the 'Letters and Sounds' and 'Jolly Phonics' programmes because they felt they are kinaesthetic, there is an element of action, touching and repetition. It was observed in the classes that teachers gave importance to reading through pictures, onset and rime as well. However, regardless of the understanding of teaching reading through several skills, there was less time for interventions as teachers planned their lessons in order to cover material from curriculum. As revealed in the interview response:

> *It is a busy classroom, a busy time there are number of things we are supposed to cover.*
>
> *All these things have to be built into what already exist (Participant 2, Susan).*

4.4.1 Phonics as one of other reading strategies

Phonics, as one of many other teaching strategies, was a recurrent subject in the responses of teachers. The importance of phonics knowledge in the earliest stages of reading development was acknowledged by participants but alongside this the majority of them held the view that it is a basis for reading but not everything. The following references from interviews illustrated their point of views:

> *I think it's the basis but it's just one of those many skills. So, a child needs to know those*
>
> *phonics sounds in order to decode the words they are reading but its one skill of many*
>
> *(Participant 3, Rachel).*
>
> *I think it needs to be everything. I don't think that phonics is the way for children to learn*
>
> *to become fluent readers. I think that children need to have everything, they need the whole*
>
> *thing (Participant 1, Nikki).*

Additionally, Key Stage 1 teachers were concerned that some children go through the phonics phase quickly where they do not need phonics instruction anymore. Maya and Julia took this issue into consideration and revealed that:

It's a means to an ending and children quite quickly move away from that sounding out principle that spitting of the words into different phonemes. Particularly in Year 2 we got lots of children who move away from that (Participant 9, Maya).

I think phonics is a part of reading. Some children find it hard than others. Obviously phonics is a big push being at the moment, you know we taught it then some children they go through that period of needing phonics quite quickly and come out the other side and want the wider reading skills and don't need that phonics skill and don't need that conscious phonics skill because it's just becomes built in and for some words it's simply doesn't work either (Participant 7, Julia).

One more point raised by Key Stage 1 teachers and perhaps less problematic in Reception was the irregularity and complexity of the English language system. They emphasised that it is necessary to teach some words using a non-phonetic approach. They believed that one approach to teaching children to read was not appropriate. When teaching words which are not phonetically decodable (tricky words) one teacher said, '*you just have to learn it*'. Below are some of the extracts that indicate their perceptions:

I think its key but I don't think it's the only thing. What does worry me is the government push on phonics being the one and only thing. Dyslexic children find the construction and deconstruction of words into letters really difficult. So, they are much better looking at whole word structures and recognise whole words (Participant 8, Sarah).

You can just have the phonetic knowledge but again as I said because there are so many exception words you cannot rely on that completely but also just because you are reading words I don't believe make you a reader (Participant 5, Karon).

I think with the new curriculum the issue we have is the very strongly accurate spelling and I think that's where we are coming stuck because we can teach phonics as a tool to reading is great. It can cause great confusion at this age for spellers. So in spelling tests we might find that there is a greater range of alternate phonemes being used in spellings than there was before (Participant 9, Maya).

Some of the respondents were clear that they had children in their classes who learn to read without having any phonics knowledge and these children have their own preferences in the

process of learning to read. So, the government push on synthetic phonics as one and only approach for every child was not appropriate. Teachers' responses indicate the learning needs of different children in their classes:

> *There is a one child in Year 2, later on it might become an issue but she can sight read, she is using the contextual cues and the visual cues so she is using all those other things for reading not having to decode any words at all (Participant 4, Maria).*
>
> *We have some children who are very visual and very tactile. We have some children who are still struggling with blending and segmenting but they recognise the words by recognising the shape and that's what they rely on (Participant 6, Lucy).*
>
> *It is very important that they do learn phonics but for some children that isn't the principal way of learning to read. Some children have a good visual memory and they can see whole words and that's actually how they learn to read. We have children come into school who can read they haven't been shown how to read they have just been observing somebody read to them (Participant 2, Susan).*
>
> *I think it's the combination because you know whatever system you have; it never suits 100% of the children. So, even if you are allowed to following phonics international adapt it because they say you should be teaching whole class but the children with severe distinct special needs are going to keep up.*

Sarah who has been teaching for 30 years believed that it is a myth that teachers do not already use phonics for teaching reading. She said that it is already there as part of the reading instructions so giving it a big push will not change the things they have been doing:

> *We were already doing it and any good school was already doing it. When that came through we were already doing it then why you (government) are making the really big thing then (Participant 8, Sarah).*

Teachers in their responses seemed concerned about how one approach of phonics can be fit for every child. Children learn in variety of ways they are at many different levels within the classroom so they need what is right for them at that time. One of the Reception teachers talked about the importance of rime for reading alongside phonics. During my school visits I

had the opportunity to see how they celebrate a nursery rhymes week to give importance to rime in relation to reading.

> *No, phonics isn't the only approach which is why we do the riming words. So rime is good we do lots of nursery rhymes (Participant 2, Susan).*
>
> *There are so many elements of reading. I don't know whether one approach is the right way. We got enough experiences of teachers thankfully in this school that haven't come through the systematic teaching of phonics to read. They know the importance of these other elements and that's why children enjoy reading (Participant 4, Maria).*
>
> *No, I don't think there is one system that works for everybody. Life is unlike that children are unlike that they are not robots. It is important that children are taught phonics very important because they are the building blocks to spelling as well as reading but it's really important that they are taught all of the other things as well, you know the other ways of recognising words and not just phonics (Participant 8, Sarah).*

4.4.2 The significance of reading for meaning and enjoyment

Reading for meaning is about a child's understanding of what he has read and to relate this understanding to their personal experiences. The majority of the teachers viewed reading for meaning as an essential element which they believed to teach throughout the day. In their views the phonics approach is not sufficient and it supports early learners only in decoding the text but it does not help to develop their comprehension skills. Below is a response of Early Years teacher:

> *Yes, I mean some children got better comprehension than others but I don't think comprehension comes from doing the phonics. They may be very good at decoding but they may have no understanding of what a story is about. You have to work continually and activities to support children developing comprehension (Participant 1, Nikki).*
>
> *We have some children who are brilliant at decoding the words and can read the whole sentence but if you ask them what have they just read then they can find that really quite tricky because they are so focused on decoding each word by the time they come back to the words to start up they already lost the meaning (Participant 6, Lucy).*

Early Years and Key Stage 1 both teachers spoke of the questioning and oral discussion strategy that they use in order to help children to understand the meaning from the text.

> *They are able to decode the words they don't know what the word is. They don't understand what the word mean. So we do spend lots of time. English children who have English background can be very good but actually not really understand what all of that text mean because they haven't put it together. In that case we would do work based around the oral discussion of language so we would get them to read the text and then describe what is in the picture then read the text again and then say what actually do you think this writing means (Participant 8, Sarah).*
>
> *Help to support that comprehension looking at the pictures in the text, ask them questions you know in between the sentences, ask them questions after they have read (Participant 6, Lucy).*
>
> *Some children read by rote but that does not mean they are understanding the text. So that's why we do lots of questioning and make sure they group read every week (Participant 11, Jan).*

In Key Stage 1 group reading was seen as an effective strategy to enhance children's understanding in reading.

> *Group reading is especially about the comprehension, there is lots of discussion in that and it's good for them to hear other people point of views as well (Participant 5, Karron).*

A Year 2 teacher, Maya, started her lesson by dividing the children into groups and assigning them with tasks set according to their abilities. She engaged one group in reading newspapers for comprehension, the other group was writing sentences about pictures, some children were arranging text in right order and she supported a guided reading group. All the children were actively participating in their activities and appeared to enjoy them. I closely observed the group reading which began with a discussion of the difference between a fiction and non-fiction book by involving past experiences of children. Through questioning she assisted them to use their prior knowledge in order to learn new knowledge. The lesson progressed through a number of phases shifting between children discussing fairy tales. Maya helped

children in developing the ability to comprehend the information from the text by engaging them in reading a non-fiction book. Maya provided opportunities for children to self-correct their responses by using sight clues and phonics knowledge. Following extract shows how she conducted the session.

Maya: Our book today is called what Ella?

Ella: Peanut.

Maya: We are going to have a flick through this book and first sort of question I am going to ask you is; how this sort of book might be different from a story book? So without reading this book you are going to skim, you are going to look how it is organised and then you are going to talk to me about the differences between this book and other books. So spend a minute or two looking through your book.

Children: Finished, finished.

Maya: So tell me about the book.

Child: it's a fact book

Maya: How do you know that?

Child 1: Because it tells us how peanut grow and how they get made into peanuts.

Child 2: There is an index at the end and there is a contents page at the beginning to show us what pages there are in the book. So that's different to a normal book.

Maya: So what would we have in our story book then?

Child: Fairy tales.

(They have discussion about subheadings, real pictures, captions and labels).

Maya: So lots of different ways we know that this is a non-fiction fact book and it's different to story books. Ok Nelofer, carry on with the book.

Child: (struggling to read a word)

Maya: 'e' and 'e' together what sound do they make. Two letters are code for one sound. Have a go and read the word…………………….....

Maya: Why is there a map here?

Child: To show where they grow.

Maya: To show where peanuts grow. Remember let's try new sentences.

Maya: Do you notice any pattern where these peanut growing countries are?

Child: I think because all the countries are yellow.

Maya: What parts of the world they are in what do you think?

Child: Hot countries. They seem to be mostly hot.

Maya: How did you work that out? There are many peanut growing places in the northern

part of the world……………………………...

Maya: What did I say I was looking for at the beginning of this guided reading session?

What did I say I was looking for in your answers? A lot about the way it's organized and

you all done really well so keep remembering how non-fiction is different from fiction.

It was observed that Maya was interested in the development of children's comprehension skills during the session through discussion and lots of questioning about the text. It seemed that guided reading group needed more practice in comprehension strategies. Most of the children in the group were able to read the text with no help from teacher but some children in the group were unable to provide correct and appropriate answers and give attention to others' responses. However, Maya appreciated their efforts, tried to engage them in the discussion and kept all of them on track in order to increase their comprehension of the text. With regard to the variations in children's reading abilities Maya used range of comprehension strategies with the whole class which concurred with what she mentioned in her interview:

We use a range. So, we would be using visual cues to add to the context, reading to the end of the sentence to see if we can pick up the meaning, we will be going through at the blooms taxonomy type questioning so very little answers to deduce answers and opinions supported by text. We are doing individual reading and guided reading regularly where there will be an assessment focus. Activities like reading and drawing for not very confident readers. There might be a sentence describing something and then children have to draw a picture, news articles for comprehension purposes as well (Participant 9, Maya).

The majority of the teachers interviewed stated that the ability to understand the text is highly related to reader's love for reading. They appeared to believe that decoding a word doesn't necessarily means children can understand it. The element of understanding enables reader to

make a fully close contact with the text and enjoy it. Discussion and explanation of the new vocabulary words with children was another strategy observed in all classes to increasing their understanding of the text. In Reception the use of big book, picture cards, teachers tone and style of reading, presentation of bold text and then in Key Stage 1 the use of syntax, grammar, selection of words, punctuation all play a vital role in enabling readers to construct meaning from the text. Some of them said that it is the result of engaging children in learning for meaning and enjoyment that they had achieved very good end of Key Stage 1 results rather than in phonics screening test. What was observed in the classes was also expressed by teachers in their responses too:

> In this class we have a routine, we do 10-15 mins of phonics everyday but that is not the most important part of reading. The other very big thing is to get them to use their imagination so they have the comprehension and to allow them to enjoy reading (Participant 1, Nikki).

> For me to be a reader is somebody who can understand the story and gets enjoyment from it. Just because you are reading a word to me does not make a reader that is somebody who can the term we use is 'bark print'. You can technically read words but for me being a reader is somebody who can comprehend and enjoy (Participant 5, Karon).

> We want them to be a reader we want them to be a whole reader and not just be able to bark print and I just feel that lots of school must be just focusing on phonics and to me that's not making a real reader. Just because you can read a word if you can't understand it, if you are not gaining any enjoyment from it what's the point (Participant 3, Rachel).

During my school visits I observed that in order to share this understanding with parents that reading is for understanding and enjoyment as a whole school strategy parents and grandparents were invited to come and read the stories for children. The reason behind sharing this understanding is participants' belief that home environment and parents play a vital role in encouraging a love of reading. Susan seemed concerned about adults spending less time in reading books with children, she said:

This age they love stories they love being read to even if they don't like anything else. Most

children will listen and enjoy having a story but if you ask them how many children have a

bed time story a lot of them will say they don't any more (Participant 2, Susan).

It was observed that children were highly interested and motivated when a familiar and loved person shared stories with them. Moreover, a book character day was celebrated where children dressed up as a character from a book they liked. The school had their own small library from where children can choose a book of their own choice and interest. It was observed that most of the children were really enthusiastic about choosing a book from the library. Within the book band system children also chose their books from a band they were working within. The data indicate that the aspects of children's choice and interest are highly important for developing a love of reading. After observing all the classes I felt that Reception is a class where teachers have more flexibility in tailoring their curriculum and therefore creating more opportunities to develop children's interest in reading. Conversely, in Key Stage One due to the prescriptive nature of reading curriculum teachers have lot to cover and less time for innovations.

4.5 Assessment and accountability measures

Assessment is central in reading instruction. It provides knowledge about the individual needs and informs teachers about future planning. It is important for teachers to be aware of what their students know already, what they need to learn more and whether they have achieved the targets or not. The knowledge that teachers gain from the process of assessment enables them to plan appropriate instructions according to the class needs and put in place effective intervention strategies.

4.5.1 Strategies used by teachers to assess reading ability

According to school's assessment policy children's achievement in reading was determined through formative, progressive and summative assessment. A combination of strategies was used to assess reading. Participants continually assessed children's progress and achievement

in reading but this information was not always be formally recorded. Relevant information was recorded on daily lesson evaluations. Some other methods of assessment included observations, questioning, marking testing and discussions. These assessments were used to track children progress and to assist in planning instruction according to individual learning needs of children. It was observed whenever a child read individually or in a group the teacher ticked off the sheet and highlighted if the child has achieved the objective of the reading session. The assessment objectives were taken from the curriculum and the assessment grades were what the school had produced. Participants mentioned different objectives that they looked at to assess children's progress in reading for word level and comprehension level. At the end of Reception children were assessed against the aspects of learning and development. In Reception they started with white band books which relates with child's ability to use a book and securing comprehension and after that they have pink band which is broad. In Year 1 children progress on to the red band relates with assessing things like decoding the words for meaning, being able to talk about the plot of the story, being able to talk about the parts they like or dislike and being able to choose their books independently as well. Besides teachers' on going assessment at the end of Year 1 children were assessed against the phonics screening check in order to fulfil the statutory requirements. In Year 2 teachers' assessments were used to assess reading and children also undertook tasks and tests in accordance with latest statutory requirements in the summer term. A Year 2 teacher Maya described aspects that she looked at for assessment:

> *My assessment would be on: can they read the sound (simple decoding) initially in a range*
>
> *of words. Can they read high frequency words on sight, are they reading diagraphs. Then I*
>
> *would assess alongside that their comprehension skills. We use our assessment sheets*
>
> *regularly when we hearing them to read and then I will plot them on the simple view and*
>
> *use that to inform some of the group reading and guiding focus (Participant 9, Maya).*

In order to check if children can read the words and comprehend them Maria did the assessment of Year 1 children by reading aloud, dictating the spelling and written activities. It was observed in her class that she stimulated children's prior knowledge by asking them to read aloud the phonemes from the board. Later, she introduced the grapheme 'eigh' as a new phoneme in order to assess if children remember the other ways of writing 'eigh' like 'ai', 'ay', 'ey', 'ea' Maria instructed to the whole class to read aloud 'ay' as in tray, 'ae' as in table and so on. Children seemed enjoying reading the words aloud and they were participating actively. The extract below is an example of what I observed in Maria's class:

Maria: The new sound today is 'eigh' for eight. Let's have a look on some more words. I will do the first one and then I am going to ask somebody to come up and do the sounds button on. So 'eight', Jess can you come and do the next one please, the sound button is underneath.

(Jess press the sound button for eighth)

Children: Eighth

Maria: Can anyone make a sentence with this word.

Child: I was eighth in the race.

The whole class read aloud some more words (Sleigh. Neighbour, weigh) and used them in sentences. Teacher explained the meaning of the words as well.

*Maria: Now you are going to the table and you would have this work sheet I would like you to do the first three lines. If you read a word and you don't know what its mean put a circle around and we can explain what it means to the whole class. After five minutes we will fold at the bottom of the worksheet and have a go for writing some of these words. So the sound today is 'eigh'. (*Teacher individually attended some of the children).

Maria: (After five minutes) *some of you got words circled please tell me what words you circled to know the meaning.*

Child: Neighbourhood

Maria: If you live on your road that your neighbourhood. So what road do you live on Elizabeth?

Child: 19 go road.

> *Maria: What are those houses on 19 go road is neighbourhood. Charlet.*
>
> *Child: p-e-n-y-w-eigh-t*
>
> *Maria: How about the sounds what sounds are there? So we can put that sounds together Pennyweight, that's very light, something very very light. Right, so fold at the bottom for your sheets. Ok have a go start writing 'eight' you are using a very long sound today.* (She helped some of the children). *Write 'I weigh eighty kg' put that in sentence.*

The lesson proceeded through several stages with an emphasis on phonics and integrating other language skills as well. Maria adopted a worksheet approach to assess if her learners had learnt the grapheme 'eigh'. She also wanted to detect if their awareness of words and comprehension skills had developed. She asked them to construct the sentences with words having 'eigh' sound. This worksheet is part of the 'phonics international' online synthetic phonics programme that school had purchased with the phonics funding. According to my observations the teaching of phonics through this approach was too rapid. The teacher appeared to rush the content to cover all the curriculum requirements. She did attend some of the children individually or discussed the word meanings with the whole class and only some children were actively participating in sentence making. Although, she had intended to enhance their word reading skills and comprehension skills, the pace of the lesson make it impossible for Maria to check whether whole class had understood what she was teaching. What was observed is validated by Maria:

> *We started using phonics international the phase was too quick that we did not feel that children haven't consolidated that sound they might be able to revisit it and its gone (Participant 4, Maria).*

The same situation was observed in Lucy's class. She also used the worksheet approach for assessment of sounds. The class was not managed from the start of the lesson, so until the last stage of the lesson most of the children were unable to show the understanding of what was taught to them. The observation of these classes bring forth the evidence of the aim initiated

in curriculum and policy namely, emphasis on the use of synthetic phonics approach and writing of simple dictated sentences that included words taught so far.

4.5.2 The government's assessment system

The majority of the respondents in the interviews were highly concerned about the Year 1 phonics screening check which was developed by the government as a measure of assessing children's phonics knowledge. The findings of the data revealed that the screening test is unnecessary and unhelpful. It does not assess reading. It is a test of decoding and not about wider reading skills. Following extracts illustrate teachers' views about Year 1 phonics screening test:

> *It does not give a true impression of enormous number of skills that children can do where*
> *words and reading are concerned it's just one element (Participant 5, Karon).*
> *I don't really see what can be used from it in terms of other than this child can read these*
> *sounds or can't read these because it's just homes on one skill of reading it doesn't look at*
> *those other skills. We have children who are high achievers in their reading and that's not*
> *always reflected in this phonics test because it's just homes on this one skill (Participant 6,*
> *Lucy).*
> *We believe so firmly in doing the whole range, we somehow manage to packet all in. our*
> *SATs test results reflect wide range of skills and phonics test just feels like we are jumping*
> *through hoops (Participant 7, Julia).*

Year 1 teachers referred to the pressure that the phonics screening test placed on them as teachers. Therefore, they have to teach the test which is considered as a barrier for teaching a wide range of reading skills which will improve the reading standards. The teachers said that they focused on teaching children to read non-words (alien words) because these words appear in the test. As Karon and Lucy said:

> *We have perhaps done more on the phonics and taught more in the way that the test is*
> *testing them because we have to you know results but I think we have done more of it this*
> *year. (Participant 5, Karon).*

It has been more pressure in terms of we have to think about teaching of the sounds we do

in order to fit the test which we wouldn't normally. Some sounds we have to teach haven't

always been relevant to our children's needs (Participant 6, Lucy).

Alongside preparing the children for this test they believed in teaching a wide range of skills. That is why when they did an analysis of children Key Stage 1 reading results and phonics screening test results. They found that children were not working at the appropriate age-related expectation as a result of the focus on phonics and decoding.

The assessment sheets alongside teachers' informal assessments for individual reading, group reading and guided reading seemed helpful for teachers to work on children's individual needs and developing children interest in reading. However, as a result of observations and participants' responses I gained the impression that due to the heavy emphasis on phonics there is less space for teachers' judgements in phonics lesson. However, what I observed there is that teachers' assessments were more effective in individual and group reading sessions. The assessment sheets alongside questioning technique for individual reading, group reading and guided reading seemed helpful for teachers to work on children's individual needs and developing children interest in reading. Observation of a Year 1 group reading session with Karon is an example of literal questioning. She assessed children's ability to recall information about non-fiction books through closed questioning. The extract below is an example of what was being observed there:

Through questioning Karon assessed children's understanding of non-fiction books which informed her further planning of instructions. As teachers reported in interviews they do assess children through many other strategies and teachers' appeared more confident about their personal assessments whereas accountability and assessment measures are barrier restricting teachers' pedagogical practices and love for reading.

4.6 The journey to achieve goals of the reading curriculum

The interview data indicate that most teachers mentioned the different approaches to teach reading and the importance of reading for meaning and enjoyment too but their pedagogical practices were mostly surrounded by the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics. The rationale behind this might be the pressure that they had experienced and as a result of meeting the demands of the curriculum objectives. Pressure to ensure curriculum coverage constrains the degree to which they experience a sense of professional autonomy. Susan expressed the pressure to accelerate children's achievement when it is not developmentally appropriate.

> *I think there is too much push for everybody to keep going upper level, upper level, upper*
>
> *level and what will end up eventually everybody is going to make that. Oh! That's not*
>
> *really a true reflection of (Participant 2, Susan).*

Susan and some other teachers were concerned about the unsuitability of the Key Stage 1 curriculum and Early Years framework for the age range it is designed for. Taking into consideration the phonics part of curriculum one of the teachers said:

> *To listen to sounds are auditory skills children are not so good at that point they are just*
>
> *for. It's quite difficult for a child who is 5 plus. (Participant 8, Sarah).*

Teachers (Susan, Julia and Karon) who raised this concern have several years of experience in the teaching profession. In the light of their practices and understandings they judged that the new curriculum introduced the things a lot earlier than they have done.

> *I think we do more advanced phonics now then we previously did whether children are*
>
> *ready for that or not. Some of the sounds we teach them are quite difficult and you know*
>
> *you say that most of the time, you do this but of course sometimes you can't. You do this*
>
> *because it's different and there is a rule. There is always an exception and I think it's*
>
> *really hard for children. Some of the stuff I teach now, I know I taught to year 3 a long*
>
> *time ago, that's quite shift (Participant 7, Julia).*

You know one of the objectives of the new curriculum is teaching words with the prefix. Oh! That is very specific. It is quite difficult to do with Year 1 because they don't necessarily understand the root word. You have to pick the words really carefully (Participant 5, Karon).

Some of the teachers revealed that the concentration on synthetic phonics alongside the Year 1 phonics screening check has made the curriculum more prescriptive. There is much more focus on grammar and accurate spellings and a range of alternate phonemes being used in spellings than there was before.

I would say when I first started teaching we had sounds in a singing singing alphabet. But know it's more prescribed and it is expected in most schools that children do a phonics session (Participant 1, Nikki).

The curriculum is quite prescriptive and it is prescriptive in the fact that you have to know certain things by certain times which I don't think will hurt the children for reading , I think the problem is if you are not sure of the order to do things like that (Participant 11, Jan).

Sarah took the changes in new curriculum in a positive manner and interpreted how it works with different ability children:

The only thing I would say about the new curriculum which is quite nice that it has focused on two things: first thing in terms of phonics that children are learning phonetic patterns, complex phonetic patterns much earlier than they use to. When we had the literacy strategy first came in I taught to Year 4 class and now being taught in Year 1 and Year 2 so that is changed. It works very well for more able children and it works well for children of average ability, the children of lower ability who find difficult have so many phonetic patterns to learn where they really should be concentrating. So that's quite tricky the other way that change is. We are now teaching children the structural sentences word level work and grammar work again which is good (Participant 8, Sarah)

As a consequence of the focus on teaching phonics it was observed in the classes that teachers followed synthetic phonics programmes as a norm made to fulfil the government requirements for synthetic phonics teaching.

4.7 Teaching practices

4.7.1 Classroom environment

The 'print rich environment' in the classroom emphasises the significance of reading for all learners and helps children to understand the concept of print. In Reception by providing the support of indoor and outdoor environment, children were given the opportunities to understand the print and connect it with the world around them. In order to give children different opportunities to interact with different print a print rich environment was provided to the children in the classes. It included, presentation of children's own work, word walls, children's made books, word cards, book corner, picture books, labelled material, and display of high frequency words according to the class level and continued with the role play sings in outdoor environment. Children chose their reading books by themselves from the reading band they were in. It was observed in some of the classes that teachers read and talked about the print which was displayed around the classroom and children were also stimulated to read around the classroom.

4.7.2 Activating prior knowledge

Children come in the class with several levels of knowledge and skills in reading. The process of learning begins by constructing new knowledge from prior knowledge. In order to implement good reading instruction it is important for a teacher to build connections between the old and the new knowledge. The strategy reflects constructivist principles in relation to how new information fits with their prior knowledge and assists them in comprehending new content. It was observed that generally participants activated learners' prior knowledge by adopting questioning technique so that previous content can be revised. Julia, a Year 1

teacher, activated learners' prior knowledge of different sounds of letter 'y'. She started the lesson by questioning the children that *where you might see it and in which words*? While assessing their prior knowledge it was clear for Julia that in oral practice some of the children were not confident enough to recognize the difference between the sound of 'y' in funny and 'y' in shy. In order to engage them in lesson and to develop their interest Julia asked them to work in pairs and write word in two columns with two different sounds of letter 'y'. According to my observation the strategy worked because the children who had pronunciation difficulties were able to read the words correctly from the list of words. Effective discussion addressed the words written by children and helped to illuminate their understanding of the difference of 'y' sound. Moreover, there was an element of appreciation throughout the lesson which built children's self-confidence and collaboration skills as they work together in pairs and assist each other in spelling work which also improved their word recognition skills. By activating their prior knowledge Julia was able to identify areas where children needed further development. Similarly Maria activated children's prior knowledge by revising the previous reading content of initial sounds and this linked to the introduction of new reading content of 'eigh' sound. Reading the initial sounds aloud arose children's interest in reading the words too. In some of the classes it was observed that teachers activated children's prior knowledge not always in the start of the lesson, but some time they used this strategy in the middle of the lesson too in relation to support children with reading and to make the text meaningful for them too. While teaching the past tense to Year 2 Olivia instructed children to use their prior knowledge in order to read the word 'share' as a root word. After that it was being observed in her class that some more learners used their phonics knowledge to read the words from board. In an individual reading session a child was struggling to read a word, Olivia asked him to revise his past tense that they did in the morning. She activated the child's prior knowledge so that he would be able to read the text

and make sense of it. It appeared that teachers assisted children in using their phonics knowledge so that they could accomplish the goal of moving from one step to the next step in their learning.

4.7.3 Teaching strategies to teach word recognition and comprehension

This theme involved data in which respondents provided information about the strategies that they used for teaching word recognition and comprehension in their classes. It was presented in the data gathered from interview and observation that they used different teaching strategies to enhance children's reading ability and to motivate their interest in reading. . Across the school children were split into letters and sounds groups according to the phase of phonics they were operating within. In the Early Years teachers followed the order of 'Phonics International' in combination with Letters and Sounds and Jolly Phonics. Teachers declared different strategies that they use in Early Years for word reading and comprehension alongside these phonics programmes. The following extracts provide example of the quotes that are categorized in the theme of teaching strategies.

> *The children associate a sound with action and they see the visual letter at the same time and there is a song that goes with it because there are lots of different approaches. If you say 'e' some children will say 'e' by seeing the word and some children will hear so (Participant 2, Susan).*
>
> *I use both approaches in class when I plan my lessons. For example I would have my phonics session in the morning and then mid later on if we are doing traditional tales I would start up with once upon a time and let the children carry on their thoughts what going to happen (Participant 1, Nikki).*
>
> *We have a role play which is an area to build up ideas and confidence. We have puppets; we have lots of picture cues especially with children who have English as an additional language (Participant 3, Rachel).*

In Reception Susan taught blending of CVC words to the group who had already learnt the consonant sounds and the short vowel sounds. Children were adding different letters cards at the start of 'at' to make new words. It was observed that she developed children's phonemic awareness through systematic synthetic phonics approach but at the same time she intended to develop the phonological awareness in children by discussing the riming words cat, bat, rat, sat and pat. It seemed that this teacher believed in the importance of phonological awareness for early reading. In the same class Susan used picture cards with the focus on teaching initial sounds to another group. She put the cards upside down, children were instructed to pick up a picture card and identify the right letter card that matched with picture. The activity was not just for teaching sounds she also helped children to get an understanding of the world they are in. For instance she explained about a picture in order to tell children what a nurse does. The activity seemed effective as children were actively participating in the activity and the learning process was quick too. Observation of Susan class reiterates her responses in the interview.

> You need to help them to realize that the picture gives the clues, you need to tell them how
> to track the text from left to right, the letters become words and words give meaning but to
> start with they can read a story from some pictures they don't actually have to have the
> ability to read. They do need the phonological awareness, they also need an awareness of
> rime they need to be able to hear, distinguish the difference between different sounds
> (Participant 2, Susan).

Reception teachers seemed to believe in different strategies for teaching reading and spoke of their worries that how too much focus on synthetic phonics can be fit for every child. In Key Stage 1 teachers followed the order of 'Phonics International' programme as a base and to access resources for teaching reading. Teachers said that they tend to do it through flash cards to look at the pattern of spelling, do little rhymes to learn sets, they made use of white boards and pens to teach prefixes or suffixes introducing to the root words and phonics games where

children needed to identify similar spilt diagraphs in the words and they revealed that they did not solely use Phonics International.

Things like teaching syllables which obviously an objective on the new curriculum, it's quite apparent at the moment, clapping the sounds that they hear the syllables and they hear the words, looking at poetry and rhyme, finding rhyming words in a text so reading always (Participant 11, Jan).

Comprehension involved in our guided reading sessions for example we have a topic where we looked at lots of books led by Shirley Hughes so we did lot of whole class storytelling, reading the text, acting as part of the story, through role play and drama then children have also series of questions that they need to answer so lots of questioning lot of comprehension (Participant 6, Lucy).

Something makes tricky words in their writing we say like what sounds are in the words and then if they have written the word they might put dots and dashes underneath and segmenting the words out. Every time when we hear a child to read there is an element of decoding and an element of comprehension as well (Participant 4, Maria).

Group reading was seen as a preferred and most frequently employed approach in Key Stage 1 for reading comprehension. The following transcript is an example of a group reading session in Year 2 class.

Olivia: Let look at the front cover of the book what do you think the book might be about Tobby?

Child: Hot chillies

Olivia: Might be about hot chilli. Can anyone predict what might happen in the story? I would like you to make a sensible choice harry.

Child: He is going to eat chillies and he is going to be hotter and need to go into the water.

Olivia: Ok, let's look at the sentence which says "Tom you are a very bad cat" what do you notice about that sentence? What does it have around that sentence Jo? Look at the punctuation what do you notice JO?

Child: It has an exclamation mark, speech marks.

Olivia: Speech marks so what does speech marks tell us Finley?

Child: They are saying something.

Olivia: How do you think Mrs Clark should say it using expression?

Oliva read the sentence "Tom you are a very bad cat" (in order to model reading with expression while children copied her and read with expression) and that sound so much better and so much interesting for the person who is listening.

Child: I know what his plan is?

Olivia: What do you think her plan is?

Child: She is going to put chilli in her soup so the cat gets hot.

Olivia: Good prediction.

This group was comprised of some less able readers from Olivia's class. She used the questioning strategy in order to help them to understand the text and to improve their reading skills. The strategy verified what she said in her interview: *So initially we teach through questioning and specific questioning as well.* She also encouraged them to predict the next parts of the story. In order to ensure that every child participated in the reading another technique used by Olivia was to ask a question and then direct it to a specific child by name. When Olivia was asked about the new curriculum she said:

> *I don't think there is being much change to phonics, there is lot more grammar. Yeah, I would say the new curriculum introduced the more correct things to do grammar (Participant 10, Olivia).*

Olivia who was recently trained as qualified teacher was found focusing more on the aspects of new primary curriculum. Observation data indicate that the group read was dominated by the elements of primary curriculum: phonics, grammar and punctuation and provides the evidence of teachers spending more time in covering the curriculum.

4.8 The importance of teacher's role and their experiences in teaching reading

This theme covered statements that participants provided about their role and personal experiences in teaching reading. Some of the respondents to the interviews conveyed that if the government wants to give them freedom so there is a need to trust them first. Sarah said

that working in the system of performance related pay means that teachers know they have to progress they have to develop themselves. In order to develop a child as a real reader they do teach the curriculum but it's the personal experience of teaching reading and understanding of tiny little steps through which they achieve the written statements. They seemed to believe in their personal judgements and the importance of their understanding of the child's needs like whether any approach will work for a child or not. One of the teachers mentioned precision teaching which focuses on learning words by sight. She tried this approach and it helped with less able readers in her class. So she thought:

> *Just because the government says do this, they still need reading SATs and stuff, we just don't take into account SATs we do our teacher assessment and teacher judgement as well, alongside them. I think it's a bit like a tick box and seems unfair to base all on one judgement of screening test (Participant 11, Jan).*

Two other teachers expressed the same views in following words;

> *It depends how you take it, you know, do you just plan for that or make sure you are just planning for the screening test alongside what you are doing in your best practise. We plan together, we plan our activities so we might have children in our class they might need additional activities, they might need additional support so we will change those plans according to our class to ensure that we are supporting them (Participant 5, Karon).*
>
> *I haven't felt pressurized because at the end of the day you are doing the best of the children that's all you can do, they are doing their best you are doing your best (Participant 10, Olivia).*

4.9 Challenges and pressures involved in the teaching of reading

The interviews sought to investigate the level of freedom teachers were enjoying and the pressures and challenges they have in relation to their pedagogical practices in the classrooms. The majority of the teachers felt lucky as the head teacher and deputy trust their reading judgement and knowledge. They have been given the flexibility to tailor their classrooms and the teaching strategies to meet the particular needs of children. Early Years

teachers revealed that alongside this flexibility they have to follow the reading criteria within the Early Years framework. They have to make sure that the majority of children reach the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. Their concerns can be understand through the following extract;

> *I think there is the flexibility there to do that but it's the busy classroom, busy time, there are numbers of things we are supposed to cover. We are following the developmental matters for Early Years where children are expected to attain the certain levels as the year go by they need to get to a particular point and some children don't achieve them (Participant 2, Susan).*

One of the respondents mentioned that the problem is the goal post has changed. She thought that when teachers feel that they are on top of something or they have achieved something, then someone new comes in and changes the things all again. Similarly Key Stage 1 teachers spoke of their worries about the specific nature of curriculum where they are having less freedom to innovate. Teachers realised that they can develop the children the way they want but with regard to new curriculum they have to follow it and teach in the way what curriculum say. As one of the participants said:

> *Reading is very precise they will learn fairy stories, you know they have to be able to recite poetry, they have to be able to decode words with these suffixes, and they have to be able to decode words with these words endings so it's very precise of what they need to know (Participant 4, Maria).*

Within the curriculum and frameworks there are certain things that children need to achieved whether they are according to their needs or not. One of the teachers expressed this view in following words: *if a child is struggling to read do they really need to know what prefixes and suffix are at that time. Is it relevant? It isn't.* Most of the respondents suggested that the government should provide guidance about what teachers need to be doing but not that specific how that need to be done.

One of the participant said they are under complete pressure all the time due to the targets, Ofsted inspections and the publishing of results. Besides this when they reach certain targets the government just make that target higher to the point where teachers cannot reach them easily. Participants thought that the expectation in the new curriculum have been raised as well.

> *You know what we expected last year from a child is much different to this year and that is pressure. These children are young and a lot is expected from them. When you look at the phonics results and you want the school to do if you want to represent your school so there is that pressure (Participant 6, Lucy).*

Although some of the teachers said that they did not teach the test but when they were asked about their freedom they pointed out that the phonics screening test restricted their professional autonomy. It seemed that at the start of the interview the majority of them were trying to state all the positive things about their practices but as we get more involved in discussion they opened up more. Therefore, when at the end I asked them about their freedom they were more open. This validated the structure of the interview protocol as well. Finally, they revealed that in an attempt to raise the level of phonics screening test, this year they have spent more time teaching the children how to recognize fake words so that they can understand the difference between fake words and real words so they can pass the test.

> *When they suggest that we should be getting better in phonics screening test, oh! Do we teach the children to pass the test or do we teach the children to read? (Participant 8, Sarah)*
>
> *Take away the phonics screening test, for half of term we can concentrating on children being able to do other things (Participant 4, Maria).*

Mostly teachers seemed under pressure from the government because the relentless introduction of new measures like the phonics screening test, the base line screening test and the standards against which as a school they will be assessed. The statements presented in this

theme suggest that participants' professional autonomy was restricted and this constrained their pedagogy in the classroom.

4.10 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the findings of data gained from interview and observation with Early Years and Key Stage 1 teachers. The data highlighted the pedagogical knowledge of teachers that underpinned the teaching of reading, the impact of their pedagogical knowledge on their practices and the elements that hindered their pedagogical practices from embracing the freedom. It was concluded from the interview and observation findings that teachers' classroom practices were mostly consistent with what they expressed in the interviews. However, there were some complex patterns and inconsistences between their responses and practices. The findings of the study revealed that all of the teachers believed in using various methods/strategies for teaching early reading. They agreed with the notion that phonics plays a significant role in improving children's reading abilities but it cannot be considered as one and only solution to fix the reading problems. It was explored from the interviews that teachers were aware of various teaching methods for teaching reading and by drawing on different teaching strategies they wanted to espouse a balanced approach (combination of approaches) in the class. They spoke about the overemphasis of systematic synthetic phonics. Teachers indicated that they assessed children's reading ability through different aspects and it was observed that the most of their assessment based on the assessment sheets they used for individual and group reading. The majority of them referred to the impact of prescriptive curriculum, testing, targets, the process of performance management on their practices. They concluded that all of these gave rise to pressures on their work and make little contribution towards creating opportunities where children can enjoy reading. Teachers reported that through effective planning and taking advantage of their experiences they tried to overcome these barriers. Although, teachers are aware of many

approaches and they had a wide range of experiences that can help children to learn to read. However, it was observed in the classes that Key Stage 1 teachers mostly follow the synthetic phonics approach in their classes in order to meet the curriculum requirements and government expectations. One more important point raised by teachers was the importance of comprehension in relation to early reading which they said is of high importance in their school but used this reasoning to explain why they had achieved good Key Stage 1 results rather than associating the Year 1 phonics screening test with raising standards. However, some of the teachers were being observed discussing punctuation, tenses, and other aspects of grammar during group reading and individual reading. The responses of teachers in interviews specified that to make a child real reader there is a need to adopt a balanced approach so that individual needs of every child can be catered. It was also pointed out that teachers would value professional autonomy if there is less pressure of testing from the government and more room for teachers' professional judgement.

However, in this chapter I have tried to provide a flavour to the reader that how the data in this study was analysed. The reasons for analysing the data have been explained. I have discussed the issues which emerged from the data. In the next chapter a detailed discussion of the study's conclusion based on the findings alongside thoughts on the implications of the study and recommendation for further research are presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter interpreted the findings of this study. These findings present an inclusive picture of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their espoused practices of reading in Early Years and Key Stage 1 in one school. The aim of this chapter is to discuss and explore how teachers perceived the teaching of early reading and the effect of these perceptions on their teaching practices. It will also be discussed here how teachers shaped and adopted educational policies in relation to teaching of reading and the extent to which policy affected their professional autonomy. The purpose of this final chapter is to provide a discussion on how the findings of this research relate to the research questions, how the findings will make a connection with what is already known in the field of reading and how these findings contribute to new knowledge. The study's limitations will be considered along with a discussion of possible developments ascending from its findings. The discussion will be held in the light of relevant literature including the recent reforms in the educational system. A range of themes will be addressed in this chapter which emerged from deep analysis of the study's qualitative data gleaned from semi-structured interviews and observations.

5.2 The importance of combine approach to reading

The Department for Education is currently focusing heavily on the use of systematic synthetic phonics as a prime approach to teach early reading. In order to advocate the synthetic approach, an approach which the government endorsed as the most effective way of teaching children to read, an initiative in form of funding for the purchase of synthetic phonics programmes was provided to schools and a phonics screening test was implemented at the end of Year 1 from 2012. It is mentioned in teachers' standards (DfE, 2012) that

teachers should demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics if they are teaching early reading.

However, for teachers who participated in this study reading development requires more than phonics. During interviews they stated that in order to support the development of fluent reading there is a need to use other approaches in the class too. The teachers did not indicate that they were anti-phonics. Although, they were positive about the teaching of grapheme-phoneme correspondences, but they were concerned about the over emphasis of systematic synthetic phonics as the main approach to teach reading to the whole class. They revealed that the school population included many EAL children and they stated that it is over-simplistic to assume that one approach will fulfil the learning needs of all children. These views clearly contradict the research evidence provided by Rose (2006), Johnston and Watson (2004) and Cook, Littlefair and Brooks (2007) who all support systematic synthetic phonics as an exclusive method to teach reading. It is revealed from teachers' responses that diverse educational needs of children in a class necessitate a combined approach (synthetic phonics and analytic phonics) to reading because there is no one single approach that can guarantee the success of all children in reading. According to teachers' perspectives children do not learn to read through one method. There are different learning preferences and different ways to cope with these learning needs, therefore laying emphasis on a synthetic approach alone is not sufficient.

The connection between these findings from the study and views of the educational researchers that I referred to earlier in chapter 2 is worth mentioning here. In chapter 2 I outlined some debates to show how controversies surrounding phonics versus whole language and synthetic phonics versus analytic phonics developed. Wyse and Styles (2007) reviewed the international research, supported by Rose, and concluded that the government recommendation of systematic synthetic phonics as 'first and fast' approach was wrong (pp.

35.41). Later, Watts and Gardner (2012; 2013) argued that present reliance on synthetic phonics as an exclusive method alone is insufficient. For Wolfe (2015) insistence on systematic synthetic phonics, a 'one size-fits-all' approach not only reduces the choice but also might result in 'deskilling teachers professionally' (p. 4). The findings of this study are consistent with the conclusion made by earlier studies (as mentioned above) but what is significant about this study is the difference between data collected from different year groups in which teachers taught. It is explored that the teaching of reading in the Early Years was based on a combination of approaches. Teachers were observed helping children to use contextual and pictorial cues in reading and rime was part of their practices too. It seemed that teachers were aware with the developmental stages in learning to read as Ehri (2005) said that the lack of knowledge in naming or sounding out the letters directed pre-alphabetic readers to adopt a visual cue approach by default. Once again the teaching which was observed in the Early Years challenged the recommendation made by Rose (2006) that systematic programme of phonics work should begin by the age of five or if not before for some children However, teachers' practices are supported by the evidence provided by Wyse and Styles (2007) who argued that it is unlikely that children under the age of 5 will benefit just from only systematic phonics instruction (Wyse & Styles, 2007). Finally, the study found that the majority of teachers were in favour of several approaches for the teaching of early reading but there were other factors that affect this finding which will be discussed in the following paragraph.

5.3 The relationship between teachers' perceptions, experience, education and training

In order to gain deeper insights into the differences in teachers' perceptions, a detailed analysis of their responses in the light of teachers' background profiles was conducted. In terms of teaching experience, participants were divided into newly qualified (1-5), semi-experienced (6-12) and highly-experienced (12 and more). Grouping respondents in this

manner revealed differences in their viewpoints due to the teaching experience amongst them. From Table 3.1 it appears that highly experienced teachers represented a majority of the sample. The results highlighted that there was a significant difference in views between highly experienced teachers and newly qualified, as well as semi-experienced teachers and highly experienced based on various level of teaching experience. In general newly qualified and semi-experienced teachers were in favour of phonics instruction more than highly experienced as evidenced by their teaching practices. This might be because of teachers' training and education background. As is shown in Table 3.1 newly qualified and semi-experienced teachers did participate in phonics training as part of their CPD. Maria had received training in 'Letters and Sounds' and 'Phonics International' programmes. She was also involved in attending meetings each term in relation to the teaching of reading and acted as a leader to teachers in Key Stage 1. Olivia received phonics training during her recent course too. There was also a significant difference between teachers' perceptions and their degree background. The findings indicated that teachers with a Master's level degree (Maria and Maya) had more knowledge of educational research than highly experienced teachers who were less involved in research based professional development. There is a lot of research into education and its' significance for teachers is well recognised. As stated by Glazzard, Denby & Price (2014) improvements in teaching are driven by research. Teachers can use research findings to support their development (p. 124). Highly experienced teachers acknowledged the importance of phonics but were also motivated towards the whole language approach for the teaching of early reading. This may be because their training was rooted in different pedagogical theories and was less recent. This finding is significant when seen in concurrence with the historical policy context in England. Before the Rose review (Rose, 2006), the National Literacy Strategy framework was based on the 'searchlights' model and this framework guided the teaching of literacy. The searchlights model assumed

that reading could be taught by using several strategies which include; phonics, grammatical knowledge, word recognition, graphic knowledge and knowledge of context. The searchlight model was derived from Goodman's whole language approach (full detail in chapter 2). Teachers who had 12 and more years of teaching experience had received their teacher training and started their teaching career in the period (as reported by some of the teachers in interviews) when the National Literacy Strategy was at its peak. As a result of the National Literacy Strategy it would have been the most expected time for whole language tenets to advocate this approach as best practice in teacher training programmes. Therefore, highly experienced teachers in their responses advocated the elements of whole language approach. Succinctly, it can be argued here that more teaching experience leads towards less motivation towards phonic approach and this interpretation is also supported in research as well. Educational research has acknowledged that teachers' perceptions and their teaching experiences have an impact on their pedagogical practices. In the USA it was concluded from a research study that teachers who had more than 21 years of teaching experience were found less supportive of reading readiness skills approach than those who had 6-10 years of experience (Giles & Tunks, 2014; 2015). Poulson et al. (2001) in their study also provided the evidence that differences in teachers' views may lead to differences in teachers' practices and the way of interpreting and making sense of the policy requirements relating to literacy (p. 290).

The guided reading strategy used in conjunction with a 'top down' approach was generally appreciated by all teachers for enhancing children's reading comprehension. They viewed guided reading as an effective strategy to meet the common needs of a group of children and help them to relate their existing knowledge with the new knowledge. These findings are in agreement with Laquinta's (2006) point of view that "guided reading provides the necessary opportunity for teachers to explicitly teach reading strategies at the students' individual

levels......and, it provides opportunities for establishing good reading habits and strategies"
(Liquinta, 2006).

Another significant aspect emerged from the findings of this research was newly qualified
teachers giving more importance to word recognition strategies even at the comprehension
level. It can be argued here that focusing on word level work in comprehension strategies is
the act of challenging the 'simple view of reading model' which demonstrate that teachers
need to provide different kind of teaching strategies (Gough & Tunmer (1986) in order to
develop children's word recognition and comprehension skills. There is evidence in the
research that guided reading is not about focusing on letters or words, rather the purpose to
this activity is to help children in developing as independent readers and to provide them
opportunities to spend more time on reading in a helpful social context (Campbell, 2002). In
the classrooms highly experienced teachers were found more skilled in teaching
comprehension level work.

5.4 Views about curriculum

The majority of the teachers in their responses indicated that their pedagogical practices are
controlled by framework and curriculum objectives. This research found that in the Early
Years expectations from teachers to follow the recommended phonics approach for teaching
reading and to following the developmental matters statements - where children are expected
to attain the certain levels - were seen as factors laying stress on teachers' pedagogical
practices. It is revealed from teachers' voices that policy makers should understand that
children are often in school a year early then they would have been, therefore from a majority
point of view children are at different stages of learning. They need to understand that some
children are not developmentally ready to learn phonics and more foundations need to be
established before children can learn to read phonics. Therefore, the use of systematic

synthetic phonics as the only approach for teaching reading in the Early Years, where children come in the class with diverse educational learning needs, is not appropriate.

It is indicated from the findings that Year 1 and Year 2 teachers were more concerned about the prescribed nature of the curriculum alongside early introduction of concepts e.g. complex phonetic patterns. Some of the teachers were not in agreement with the early introduction of concepts but it was revealed from their responses that they had no option but to follow the curriculum. The rationale behind teachers' disagreement was the diverse learning needs of children in a class. They expressed that the teaching of complex phonetic patterns work well with able children and children of average ability but the children of lower ability find that difficult. In this situation teachers saw the curriculum just as a guideline informing them about the content that they must deliver while teaching early reading. In the light of these views it can be argued that the new curriculum does not cover the learning needs of all ability groups of children. The findings gathered from interviews and observations shown that as a consequence of being required to meet curriculum requirements there is less space for teachers' own pedagogical beliefs. Teachers are left with the dilemma of making a choice between an emphasis on the development of children reading for meaning and pleasure skills or an emphasis on following the curriculum requirements through employing already chosen strategies. What is quite clear here is the mismatch between what teachers perceived the effective teaching of reading is and the actual practice in the classrooms where teachers were trying to encompass the rigidity of the curriculum in the light of their pedagogical beliefs.

5.5 Some consistencies and inconsistencies between teachers' pedagogical perceptions and classroom practices

The findings of this study revealed that consistency between Early Years teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their classroom practices was high. In contrast it was low in relation to Key Stage 1 teachers. The Early Years teachers' responses in the interviews were

consistent with their classroom practices as they tended to use a blend of reading approaches including the whole language approach and the phonics approach. During the observation it was noted that a range of strategies were employed including; reading aloud strategy, asking children to sound out the new sound alongside actions. Flashcards, contextual cues, pictorial cues all were part of their teaching. In the interviews Early Years teachers gave importance to onset and rime as an important level in phonological awareness. In their classes they were observed focusing on onset and rime for children success in reading. The significance of onset and rime in relation to early reading referred to the discussion of phonological awareness in chapter two where Goswami, (2007); Wise, Olson & Treiman, (1990) acknowledged that in language such as English the awareness of onset and rime is crucial for literacy acquisition instead of those approaches in which emphasis is given on phonemic constituents.

Conversely, the responses of Key Stage 1 teachers in the first half of the interviews indicated that like Early Years teachers they placed emphasis on the use of a combination of approaches and not only on phonics. However, their classroom practices were not consistent with their views. It was observed in Year 1 and 2 classes that teachers were under pressure of fulfilling the statutory requirements of the curriculum. In doing that they were observed using a worksheet approach from a systematic synthetic programme 'phonic international'. As mentioned previously in chapter 4, the phase of this worksheet approach was very quick, left less time for the development of creativity in class. Teachers were found under pressure of covering the required number of sounds as specified in the curriculum so that children could be ready for the screening test at the end of Year 1. Some of the teachers did use some other strategies such as pair work which was found effective but the main focus was on the systematic synthetic phonics approach. However, whatever teachers said with regard to teaching of reading comprehension was consistent with what was observed in Key Stage 1

classes. Questioning was one of the strategies that the majority of the teachers indicated they used in order to assess children's comprehension of the text. The observation of their classes revealed that through questioning teachers encouraged children to think deeply, appreciated their answers and sometimes these answers were used as prompt for further discussion. In some classes incorrect answers were not ignored completely rather teachers tried to address children's misunderstanding and improved their comprehension. In the light of my observation of teachers' guided reading sessions it was clear that questioning techniques used by teachers helped readers not only to understand the text but also made connections between what they already knew and what they had read. It was observed that there was much space for children to develop an interest in reading. The focus was on reading for meaning and teachers activated learner's prior knowledge through questioning as well. Activating learners' prior knowledge is considered as an effective strategy in the research. Fisher, Frey and Lapp (2012) emphasised that learners' background knowledge is increasingly diverse and sometimes this knowledge is inaccurate or has gaps and sometimes it is complex and robust. In order to enable them to involve fully in learning experiences teachers need to activate their appropriate prior knowledge (p. 20). Overall, the observation of guided reading sessions identified the features of constructivist learning and teaching, where teachers as facilitators provided opportunities to children, they worked collaboratively in groups with the freedom to think and reflect on ideas to construct meaning from the text. It can be concluded here that as teachers become more experienced, they may approach reading well.

5.6 Reading for pleasure

The aim of this research was to explore teachers' perceptions about different approaches to teach reading, developing children's love of reading was a new theme that emerged from the findings. Encouraging children to read for pleasure is also one of the current emphasised agendas from the government. It is stated in the new national curriculum that "all pupils must

be encouraged to read widely across both fiction and non-fiction to develop their knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live, to establish an appreciation and love of reading" (DfE, 2013, p. 15). In order to provide research evidence related to the significant of reading for pleasure the DfE published a report *Research Evidence on reading for pleasure* (2012). In this report several research findings are summarised which suggest the factors that have an impact on children attitude towards reading. The following discussion demonstrates how the research findings relate to the findings of this research study. Teachers in their responses talked about the drop in children's motivation towards reading. The decline in children's attitudes towards reading is also indicated in the educational research and supported by evidence from Twist et al. (2007). One of the rationales behind this decline identified by teachers' was lack of motivation from parents. Teachers suggested that children spend more time with technology instead of listening to stories with an adult. The significance of parents and the home environment role is acknowledged by Clark & Rumbold (2006). In their research findings they concluded that parents and the home environment play a vital role in the early teaching of reading and helps to develop a love of reading. They suggested that in homes where reading and books are valued children are more likely to continue to be reader (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). The significant of love for reading has been highlighted in the results of international performance surveys. PIRLS (2011) also provided the evidence that pupils who reported a larger number of books at home had higher mean achievement scores than pupils who reported fewer books at home (p. 6). Parents sharing and reading books to their children were seen as a significant literacy intervention by Brooks (2002). Bus et al. (1995) conducted a large meta-analysis in this area. Nine studies were included in their quantitative meta-analysis in order to provide empirical evidence about this topic. Finally, the analysis of these studies supported the effectiveness of parent reading books to children which is related to reading achievement.

The majority of the teachers in their responses expressed the view that being able to read the word on a page is not enough, a real reader is one who can get enjoyment from reading. They were concerned with the issue of adopting one method to teach early reading which in their view will not make reading an exciting activity for children. They believed that methods used for teaching reading should bring pleasure and motivate children. Fisher, Brooks & Lewis (2002) argued that in this situation "teachers become more like technicians and assembly line workers, where everyone is accomplishing the same thing at the same time" (p.186).

The observations of teachers' classes informed this study about the activities that were adopted as a whole school approach or in individual classes in order to raise children's positive attitude towards reading. Involving parents and other adults in supporting reading, use of interactive whiteboards, small whiteboards for the presentation of children's work, use of library resources, valuing children reading choice and teachers' appreciation on children's reading are some of the factors valued by teachers and also supported by research evidence too. Lockwood (2012) argued that a 'moderate relationship exists between reading attitude and reading achievement' (p. 240). However, the data collected from observation provided the evidence that the pressure of phonics screening check results, the coverage of more grammar focused curriculum, statutory assessments, league tables all have reduced the time that teachers could invest in enhancing children love of reading. In this constricted context it is difficult for teachers to cope with these factors and plan their daily lessons creatively where children can read for pleasure. Actually there is a need for the government to realize that their own educational policies are getting in the way to develop a love of reading.

5.7 Teachers' professional autonomy

Prior to a discussion of the significance of teachers' interpretations in terms of their professional autonomy in the context of policy reforms and practice it is worth giving a brief description of findings revealed from this study.

The data gathered from interviews demonstrated teachers' views that making the nature of their schools public through Ofsted inspections and league tables plays a vital role in the extent to which they are provided freedom in their teaching practices. However, the notion of delivering an externally controlled curriculum, national testing, the requirement of producing high results, performance measures were the most commonly identified factors expressed by teachers which limited the level of their autonomy. As a result, the active policies that offered autonomy to teachers, while concurrently prescribed procedures and regulations are viewed as contrary. Almost all of the teachers recognised the contradiction of policy with regard to autonomy combined with controlled frameworks and the demanded performance according to pre-determined measures. They acknowledged that as long as they are accountable to produce the expected results from tests, they cannot use their powers but if they do what is expected from them, and then they can be afforded the autonomy. The findings related to teachers' autonomy reflected the mode of 'performativity in public sector' (Ball, 2003). Ball argued that performativity requires practitioner to ignore their personal views and construct their actions in a way that they would be better able to response to targets, evaluations and indicators (Ball, 2003, p. 215). In this mode of performativity "teachers are represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who calculate about themselves, 'add value' to themselves, improve their productivity, strive for excellence and live an existence of calculation" (Ball, 2003, p. 217). In relation to teaching of reading the 'phonics screening check' was one of the performance measures identified by teachers against which their school performance would be assessed. The analysis of teachers' responses with regard to this test

indicated the level of pressure they have during teaching reading. One reason for the pressure was the low results in the phonics screening test because they were giving much importance to comprehension. In the performativity culture which demands them to improve the attainment of children in phonics, some of the teachers revealed that now they had started to teach to the test even though they did not want to. The analysis of findings showed how teachers' values were challenged in the climate of performativity where they sacrificed their personal judgements, beliefs and commitments for performance. Although, it is acknowledged in the research that; when teachers are well educated and aware of the 'cognitive mechanisms' involved in reading, they have the knowledge of teaching and assessing phonics then the mandatory phonics screening check is unnecessary. In this case teachers' decisions are enough for this purpose (Duff et al., 2015). Wyse (2000) also talked about the futility of such tests and argued that there is a need to be cautious of tests that measure the impact of phonics teaching on children reading because they do not give evidence of a wide range of reading knowledge which is vital to learning to read.

In line with available literature, teachers' views and analysis of these are presented in chapter 4 and in spite of the government's explicit ambition to change the level of teacher autonomy, there is a little doubt that somehow the teaching profession is still not completely free but seems an externally controlled profession. Finally, the extract from one of the teachers' interview is worth reporting here:

> *What really worries me the things that are politically driven and the change is politically driven. I think it was good that schools were given extra funding to make sure that phonics was being taught however I think the guidance that the phonics is the only way to teach reading is just wrong. As usual what the government does it they pick an idea that one person has said the good idea and then they go with it and now we are left with the system where we have got this phonics screening test which no teacher in their right mind who knows who to teach children to read thinks is a good test but this test is being used to grade our schools and grade the work we are doing in our schools (Participant 8, Sarah).*

5.8 Conclusion

Before this study make the final conclusions it is worth reviewing the research aims and questions and how the findings answered these questions.

5.8.1 Review of the aims of the study

Firstly, I aimed to identify and explore teachers' pedagogical knowledge with regard to teaching of early reading and the impact of this knowledge on their practices. In doing so the main purpose was to explore teachers' perceptions about several approaches to teach reading. Secondly, I attempted to understand how educational policies and reforms in relation to teaching of reading have an impact on teachers' practices and their professional autonomy. Within a qualitative case study approach the use of qualitative methods (semi-structured observation and semi-structured interview) assisted to collect an in-depth data. In order to explore teachers' diverse pedagogical knowledge and practices within this study their reported perceptions were analysed. The purpose of the analysis was to explore the key research questions that guided this study;

➢ How do primary teachers demonstrate aspects (knowledge, skill and autonomy) of professional identity while teaching reading to children in their classes?

➢ Which strategies and approaches for teaching reading do primary school teachers adopt after the implementation of the new national curriculum (2013)?

➢ How much professional autonomy do teachers feel when making key decisions for the teaching of early reading?

➢ What are primary teachers' perspectives towards teaching reading through phonics, and the autonomy proposed in recent policy?

In the light of findings and analysis, this study has revealed a broad image of 11 teachers' pedagogical perceptions and practices in the Early Years and Key Stage 1 classes. The study has also indicated some of the inconsistencies between teachers' views and their actual

135

teaching practices. Finally, these findings explored the factors derived from the outside environment that have an impact on teachers' practices too.

A range of implications have been raised from the findings of this study for the teaching of early reading in England which can bring forth certain conclusions. It is evident from the findings that teachers have the knowledge of several approaches to teach reading and how these should be employed in their classes. Most of the teachers talked about the reading approaches akin to those mentioned in the literature review chapter of this thesis. Whatever teachers stated in their responses has a connection with their training, education the level of class they taught and number of years teaching experience they have. The teachers who have 12 and more years of teaching experience saw the teaching of reading in line with the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy where phonics was part of their conversation but with the emphasis on other teaching strategies as well. There were less differences in reception teachers' views and practices. Instead this exploratory study has revealed differences in Key Stage 1 teachers' perceptions in relation to teaching of early reading. There were some inconsistencies between Key Stage 1 teachers' pedagogical views and their pedagogical practices due to the constraints of educational policies. The phonics screening test and more specified curriculum were also the identified factors that caused the inconsistency between Key Stage 1 teachers' views and practices and according to Fang (1996) this inconsistency in beliefs and actions is not unexpected. Generally, teachers did not seem to be implementing what they perceived and believed about teaching of reading. Instead, they delivered some of the choices related to pedagogy which they thought was safe because they were in a position where they were required to do this. The finding revealed that while working in current educational system teachers tended to stick with the systematic teaching of phonics but also tried to use other reading strategies as well in order to fulfil the

individual needs of their children. It reflects a splitting between teachers' views, students' needs and the norm of performativity.

Generalizations are not possible from the perceptions of 11 teachers working in a same school. However the observation of their classes helped to identify the gap between theory and practice which is needed to identify and address. In terms of teachers' pedagogical practices of teaching reading, it is evident that the emphasis on the use of systematic synthetic phonics in the new curriculum as a prime approach to teach early reading does not match with the diverse needs of all children in the class. Although the new national curriculum is not as prescriptive as the formal curriculum, the state control on the choice of pedagogic decisions, the statutory assessment of phonics and the heavy focus on grammar (the future plan to assess children grammar learning through testing) are all the worrying issues for teachers. The new curriculum provides more freedom to teachers existing in the culture of performativity where they are expected to carry all these above mentioned burdens on their shoulders. It was noticeable that teachers were aware to the certain extent of pedagogical knowledge but they were surrounded with a system where their voices had been muted. Therefore, there is a need to give teachers freedom with regard to the choice of approaches for teaching reading because they are more aware about children's needs than politicians. It can be recommended here that if there is less restriction on the use of any specific approach to teach children to read teachers will be in best position to increase children's attainment in early reading in the light of their experiences.

The danger of children's low results in the national statutory assessment is leading teachers towards the teaching and preparation of test even when there should be a greater focus on reading comprehension and reading for enjoyment. Some of the teachers were focusing on the word level work rather than engaging children in gaining meaning from the text. The government is trying to increase reading attainment by increasingly being prescriptive about

what teachers should teach and how they should teach it. This does not give significance to teachers' own pedagogical beliefs and it is an approach which is counter-productive. There is a need for the government to realize that teachers deserve recognition instead of expecting them to just response to the guidance.

This study has explored that teachers work in a complex environment with several outside forces challenging their personal values and professional agency. This situation is restrictive and the teachers in this study believed in using a combine approach. Practically it is recommended that there should be a balance in the system where teachers have the opportunity to give voice to their views.

According to my understanding teaching of reading is an area where there is no end and always much more to explore. Conducting this research has unearthed several areas that need to be explored further. This study sought to explore teachers' pedagogical knowledge and practices in relation to teaching of early reading and the findings show that teachers' implementation of any instructional approach to reading varies due to the number of years teaching experience they had and the year group they taught. It can be worth exploring in future research that what impact teachers' qualification can cast on their pedagogical perceptions and practices. It would also be interesting to explore parents' perceptions towards different approaches of teaching reading and also, the impact of the new curriculum on children reading attainment.

5.8.2 Limitations of the study

The study is limited due to the number of participants and the fact that all of the data was collected from one school. All the information was gathered from one school so if there were more schools involved in the study it might be possible to make a broad comparison between teachers' pedagogical perceptions. Most of the teachers were highly experienced and there were fewer newly trained teachers. By involving more schools in the study might help to

make more comprehensive comparisons between newly qualified and highly experienced teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their classroom practices. However, the strength of this case study helped to gain in depth data.

Another limitation was the time factor because this study was conducted in the last term when teachers were busy in doing end-of-year assessments, therefore fewer appointments were given for the observations of their classes. However, I tried to get enough data from their classes.

5.8.3 Conclusion

There is no one absolute way of teaching reading. The diverse nature of a classroom where children come with diverse learning abilities cannot cope with one prescribed approach. There is a need to trust teachers by giving them freedom to adapt reading approaches in their instructions according to children's needs. Previously a number of studies have been conducted about teaching of early reading. This study contributes to the current knowledge on teachers' pedagogical knowledge and the impact of this on their pedagogical practices by examining their teaching practices. This study was conducted in times of change in education policy context with number of proposals for teachers. In order to make its contribution this study would seek to explore how the implementation of the new curriculum (DfE, 2013) and the government interventions have influenced teachers' pedagogical practices and their professional autonomy in making pedagogical decisions. Finally, I have come to an understanding that the teaching of reading cannot rely on one approach for every child and too much national assessment at every step of learning increases the level of pressure on teachers and decreases the opportunities of creating children's interest in reading.

Appendix 1 Interview Protocol

Introduction of myself

Explain the aim of this study.

Teachers' pedagogical knowledge:

- How do you describe a good teacher of reading?

- What skills do children need in order to learn to read?

- How do you define whole language instruction and phonics instruction?

- What do you think about the relationship between phonics and teaching of reading?

- Do you feel any change in your understanding about teaching of early reading in last few years?

Pedagogical practices

- How do you teach syllables, onset and rime, letter-sound relationship exception/tricky words, suffixes? (word recognition)

- Which strategies do you use for teaching reading comprehension?

- What do you think about the English alphabetic system?

- Which phonic approach are you using?

- How did you teach phonics before the introduction of systematic synthetic phonics?

- Does the one approach to reading meet the individual needs of all children?

- Does the good performance of children in word recognition transfer to reading comprehension?

- How do you assess young children's reading?

- What do you think about the effectiveness of phonics screening test?

Teachers' autonomy

- What does teacher autonomy mean to you?

- Do you have the freedom to decide how to teach early reading?

- Are there external pressures you face while teaching early reading?

- What do you think in which ways your autonomy for teaching early reading can be enhanced?

- Do you want to add anything else in relation to teaching of reading?

Appendix 2 Observation protocol

School: _____

Teacher: _____

Class: _____

Topic: _____

Date: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

Tick mark	
	The teacher develops children's interest in instruction in order to develop their word recognition skills.
	The teacher helps children to understand the grapheme-phoneme letter-sound correspondence and develops their skill of blending.
	Children's prior knowledge was activated by teacher.
	The teacher actively involves the children in the reading activities.
	The teacher arranges the schedule to develop learners' phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension through a range of strategies.
	The teacher involves children in comprehension strategies through whole class, independent, guided or shared practice.
	Children were engaged in constructing the meaning from the text.
	The teacher helps children to develop the comprehension strategies of prediction, questioning and clarifying, imagining and summarization.
	The teacher provides opportunities to students to apply their phonic knowledge.
	The teacher encourages students to read for pleasure.
	The teacher actively develops the vocabulary by making link between known and new words and discusses the meaning in similar words.
	The teacher uses different assessment strategies in order to select interventions according to children's needs.

Appendix 3 Consent form

<div align="center">

University of Huddersfield

School of Education and Professional Development

Informed Consent Form

</div>

I have been fully informed about the aims and purpose of the study.

I understand that:

1. my participation in this research study is voluntary and I may choose at any stage to withdraw my participation.

2. if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to stop the interview.

3. according to the recommendations of the Revised Ethical Guidelines provided by the British Ethical Research Association the researcher will:

   secure data safely and anonymously,

   aim for faithfulness and integrity in transcription, analysis, interpretation, reporting and dissemination of the data,

   use quotations only with a pseudonym.

4. Notes will be written during the observation. An audio tape of the observation will be made.

5. The interview will last for approximately 30-45 minutes and notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made.

6. faculty and administrators from my school have no access to raw notes or audio recordings.

7. this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Ethical Committee of School of Education and Professional Development at the University of Huddersfield.

   I have understood the nature of this study. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate.

Participant

Name of Participant------------------------ Signature ------------------------ Date --------------

Researcher

Name of Researcher------------------------ Signature ------------------------ Date --------------

Appendix 4 Personal details of participants

Personal details

Name……………………………………………………………….

Qualification……………………………………………………

Teaching experience……………………………………………

Responsibilities in school………………………………………

Training/instructional programmes attended for teaching of early reading

……………………………………………………………………....

Appendix 5 Observation field notes

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">**Observation field notes**</td></tr>
<tr><td align="center">**Date: 10/7/15**</td><td align="center">**Time: 9.45**</td></tr>
<tr><td align="center">**Class: Year 1**</td><td align="center">**Teacher: Karon**</td></tr>
<tr><td>**No of Children: 6**</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">**Lesson Task:**</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Guided group reading of a nonfiction book</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">**Description:**</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Teacher started with the discussion of the previous literacy lesson. She wanted to start with a nonfiction book. Children were actively participating in the discussion. Through questioning teacher activated children's prior knowledge in order to give them new knowledge. She discussed the title, writer's name, blurb, contents and caption. She helped children to use their phonics knowledge in order to read the words and helped them in blending the grapheme phoneme correspondences in order to decode the words. A child used his phonics knowledge to read 'metal'. Teacher engaged children in reading individually through questioning. She was enthusiastic so that children took interest in the session. Karon was using assessments sheets to make a record if children have reached the objectives.</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix 6 Sample interview transcript

[handwritten top right: "word reading + comprehension"]

How do you describe a good teacher of reading?

So they have to have an understanding that's not just about reading it's about the comprehension alongside the reading. So firstly they working on trying to get a child to say the words using their sounds and then blending them. And then after that once their reading of fluency of expression of their reading and then you looking for the comprehension so it builds upon each other from the beginning.

What skills does a child should have in order to learn to read?

[handwritten right: "phonics"]

So, Today obviously its change since we were at school but they rely on a lots of their phonics teaching. So, basic sounds and phonemes they go together and digraphs and learning how to read them and putting them into sounds a lot of children and especially I had one child how is eal and has not been to school before and they have actually learn to read from the sight rather than the phonics sounds because they have missed out on that reception and year 1 and phonics that all the other kids learn to read so it kind of show me it can be done in both ways because this child will eventually read the words because she learn them and once she learn them she can read them.

[handwritten left: "Sight reading"]

How do you define phonics and its relationship with reading?

Yes, so it is almost the foundation of reading really, so when children come into reception they taught the basics sounds and then the next step is blending the sounds and then next step is being able to say the sentence because they got that sound knowledge so I think its firstly important. Although we are doing phonics international at the school, I do use a lot of my reading lesson sounds work and jolly phonics. At university we learn a few scheme so I am using those strategies as so I think a mixture of them is a the best approach rather than the one strategy.

[handwritten left: "mixture of strategies rather than one"]

Do you feel any change in your understanding after the new primary curriculum?

I don't think there is being much change to phonics, there is lot more grammar and things like that we have not start to teach a lot earlier than we would have but that sort of comes a little bit later for our more able readers. So it completely depends on their ability to read but some struggle to read cvc words. Yeah, I would say the new curriculum introduced the more correct things to do grammar.

[handwritten left: "focus on phonics"]

How do you teach the letter sound relationship, tricky words and onset and rime?

Yeah, it tends to be the synthetic approach, so will tend to have white boards and pens on the carpet and needs every child have one. Then we will introduce them to for example prefixes and suffixes introducing to the roots word, talk about the words that can go before and so they will give me a some little prefixes that might go before talk about how it can change the meaning and certain likewise with suffixes then they have a go with writing. Some of them

[handwritten left: "mainly synthetic phonics"]

on the board and then we will feedback and see what they go off. i do a lot of marvellous mistakes and they very much know that its ok to go wrong and that we are learning so often I actually choose someone to write up on the board that hasn't got right but may be a lot of those children also hasn't often got it right and because they often learn when they make mistakes and then to see it wrong and then to see at how can we make it look better.

How do you teach the comprehension part? *(basic questioning)*

So, initially we teach through basic questioning and specific questioning as well. When they are reading so we start with; oh how do you think that character is feeling? Then it goes as their comprehension and understanding progresses it goes to a lot of more inferences and deduction. It does not necessarily say on the paper but might be inferred by what the text has said. So we practice that when we do individual reading with them and we practise that in group reads so they can have a little bit discussion about it and also in literacy lessons. So when there is something they don't understand or I am not sure they have taken it in, just do questioning. We have our reading folder that goes with each colour scheme level and they give you some ideas of comprehension they should have when they are at that level. You got a rough idea when you are taking off the targets and you don't just moving up the level because they can read it, they should have to have other skills as well.

individual reading + group reading

discussion

I have never heard of phonics international before I came here. In my placements in schools we have done jolly phonics and letters and sounds.

Does one approach of phonics can be ok for every child?

No no, I think it's similar to general teaching so there will be children who are aesthetic learners, who are visual learners there will be children who need to listen or to write. some children are going to learn it by copying it out 5 times, some children are going to learn phonics by talking about it and some children are gone learn by constant practice and some children will just get it. So yeah, I think it's really important that you use a range of strategies which is really why although we use phonics international here I have come in and used different strategies, all the bits I like.

Freedom in school

use different strategies according to own experience

Phonics international is very much learning through copying like they have to copy the word and then u draw picture and then u write a sentence. I didn't necessarily think that the worksheet approach would always work for the kids so I did the mixture.

Does the one approach to reading meet the individual needs of all children? (If a child struggle to read and has been taught through systematic synthetic phonics, what do you think is appropriate for that child?) *(teacher judgement)*

Yeah it's tricky and I think it's about teacher judgement and you know in your class and got the feeling whether it's working for that child or not. We do an approach with our low readers we called it precision teaching they have a list of words and each day they have to practice reading those words and we will continue with that list until they really got them. That's more learning words by sight really. I have tried with this approach and it had helped with few of our less able readers. I think just because the government says do this they still need

focus on sight reading

reading Sat and stuff, we just don't take into account SATS we do our teacher assessment and teacher judgement as well alongside them.

[handwritten note: teacher assessment + teacher judgement]

Freedom

I think, there needs to be some sort of guidance about what schools need to apply things, across the country children need to be given an equal opportunity, need to be learning about similar kind of things. Often people say SATS in year two very two young and testing them in year 1 which seems these children are very young. So when its teaching of reading often it depends on the cohort of children you have, in different areas in different parts of the countries different approaches will work like wise when you have a class different approaches will work for different children.

[handwritten note: different strategies works according to individual needs]

We just follow the government curriculum and we some time change it.

External pressure and challenges

[handwritten note: Unfair judgement? through screening test]

I think its a bit like a tick box. It seems unfair to base all on one judgement of screening test. I haven't felt pressurized because at the end of the day you are doing the best of the children that's all you can do, they are doing their best you are doing your best.

[handwritten note: teacher hard work matter]

How teachers' freedom can be enhanced?

So having guidance of what we need to be doing but not having that specific how that need to be done that gives teachers a lot more flexibility. Well in the noncore subjects the curriculum is very general but in reading I think its ok to give a one approach a go but teachers just need to use personal judgements too, need to be flexible and give children additional support in a way that supports them if necessary

[handwritten note: additional support for children]

I really enjoy when reading with children and its really lovely to see them progress

[handwritten note: Need to Provide Flexibility to teachers]

[handwritten note: Teacher need to be flexible]

[handwritten note: Teacher Personal Judgement matter]

References

Adams, M. J. (1994). Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print. Cambridge:

    MITPress.

Allington, R. L. (2002). Big Brother and the National Reading Curriculum: How Ideology

    Trumped Evidence. Portsmouth, NH : Heinemann.

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Education. (2011). Report of the Inquiry into Overcoming

    the Barriers to Literacy. Retrieved from

    http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/pdfs/2011-appge-literacy-report.pdf

Association of teachers and lecturers. (2013). Reform of the National Curriculum in England,

    Response from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers. Retrieved from

    https://www.atl.org.uk/.../national-curriculum-consultation-april-13.pdf

Avis, J. (2006). Improvement through research: Policy science or policy scholarship.

    doi:10.1080/13596740500508001

Ball, S. J. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. Journal of Education

    Policy, 18(2), 215-228. doi:10.1080/0268093022000043065

Beck, I. L., & Juel, C. (1995). The role of decoding in learning to read. American Educator,

    19(2), 8. Retrieved from http://scholar.google.co.uk

BERA. (2011). Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. 1-11.

Blasé, J. J., & Kirby, P. C. (2000). Bringing out the best in teachers: What effective principals

    do. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Bradley, L., & Bryant, P. E. (1983). Categorizing Sounds and Leaning to Read. A Causal

    Connection. Nature, 301, 419-421. doi:10.1038/301419a0

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research

    in Psychology, 3 (2), 77-101. Retrieved from http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/11735

Brooks, G. (2002). Trying to count the evidence. In Fisher, R., Brooks, G., & Lewis, M. (Eds.), Raising standards in literacy. (pp. 137-150). London: Routledge/Falmer.

Brooks, G. (2010). The government's proposed decoding test for 6-year-olds. Retrieved from http://www.ukla.org/news/professor_greg_brooks_critiques_the_governments_propo sed_decoding_test_for_/

Brooks, M. C., & Brooks, J. S. (2005). Whole language or phonics: Improving language instruction through general semantics. ETC: A Review of General Semantics, 62(3), 271-280.

Browne, A. (1998). A practical guide to teaching reading in the early years. Sage, London: Paul Chapman.

Browne, A. (1998). Teaching Reading in the Early Years. London. Sage.

Brundrett, M. (2013). Enhancing professionalism in primary education. International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education, 41(3), 251-253. DOI: 10.1080/03004279.2013.808084. http:// www.tandfonline.com/loi/rett20

Bryman, A. (2012). Social research methods. (4th ed). Oxford.

Bull, B. L. (1988). The Nature of Teacher Autonomy. Revision of Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research. ERIC.

Campbell, R. (2002). Reading in the early years handbook (2nd ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Castles, A., & Coltheart, M. (2004). Is there a causal link from phonological awareness to success in learning to read? Cognition, 91(1), 77-111. doi:10.1016/S0010-0277(03)00164-1

Chall, J.S. (1970). Learning to read: The great debate, an inquiry into the science, art and ideology of old and new methods of teaching children to read, 1910-1965. New York; Maidenhead;: McGraw-Hill

Clark, C., & Rumbold, K. (2006). Reading for Pleasure a research overview. The National

   Literacy Trust. Retrieved from

   http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/research/nlt_research/271_reading_for_pleasure_a_researc

   h_overview

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). Research Methods in Education. (7th ed).

   Abingdon: Routledge

Cook, M., Littlefair, A., & Brooks, G. (2007). Responses to Wyse and Styles' article,

   "Synthetic phonics and the teaching of reading: The debate surrounding England's 'Rose

   Report'" (literacy, 41, 1, April 2007): The importance of historical accuracy. Literacy,

   41(3), 169-170. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9345.2007.00472.x

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). Basic of Qualitative Research. (3rd ed). California; Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2013). Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five

   approaches. (3rd ed). Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2014). Research design: qualitative quantitative, mixed method approaches.

   (4th ed). Sage.

Dahl, K. L., & Scharer, P. L. (2000). Phonics teaching and learning in whole language

   classrooms: New evidence from research. The Reading Teacher, 53(7), 584-594.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S., (Eds.) (2000). The handbook of qualitative research. (2nd ed).

   Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) (2008). Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry. (3rd ed).

   Sage.

Department for Education and Skills. (2006b). Primary Framework for literacy and

   mathematics. Retrieved from www.educationengland.org.uk/

Department for Education. (2006a). Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading:

   Final Report. London: Retrieved from www.education.gov.uk/

Department for Education. (2010). 'The importance of teaching': the schools' White Pater.

    Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/

Department for Education. (2011a). Assessment framework for the development of the Year

    1 phonics screening check. London. Retrieved from

    https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-framework-for-the-

    development-of-the-year-1-phonics-screening-check

Department for Education. (2011b). Criteria for assuring high-quality phonics work.

    Retrieved from www.babcock-education.co.uk/ldp/do_download.asp?did=3814

Department for Education. (2011c). Funding for phonics teaching to improve children's

    reading. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/.../

Department for Education. (2011d) The Importance of Phonics: Securing Confident Reading.

    London: Retrieved from www.education.gov.uk/

Department for Education. (2012) Research Evidence on reading for pleasure. Retrieved from

    https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-evidence-on-reading-for-pleasure

Department for Education. (2012). Teachers' Standards. London: Retrieved from

    https://www.gov.uk/DfE. 2012a. Teachers' Standards. London: DfE.

Department for Education. (2013a). Elizabeth Truss speaks on the national curriculum to the

    Fellowship Commission. Retrieved from

    https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/elizabeth-truss-speaks-on-the-national-

    curriculum-to-the-fellowship-commission

Department for Education. (2013b). The National Curriculum in England. Key Stage 1 and 2

    framework document. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/

Department for Education. (2014). Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage.

    Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/

Department for Education. (2015a). Phonics screening check and Key Stage 1 assessments: Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/

Department for Education. (2015b). Reading: the next step supporting higher standards in schools. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/

Department for Education. (2015c). Standards and Testing Agency: Statutory guidance Phonics Screening Check. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara/phonics-screening-check

Department for Education. (2016a). Educational excellence everywhere. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/educational-excellence-everywhere

Department for Education. (2016b). English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc/english-baccalaureate-ebacc

Department of Education Science and Training. (2005). Teaching Reading: Report and Recommendations: National Enquiry into the Teaching of Literacy. Barton, Australia.

Department of Education Science and training. (2005). Teaching Reading, Reports and Recommendations, National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy. Retrieved from research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?filename=2&article=1004...tll...

Dombey, H., E. Bearne, T. Cremin, S. Ellis, M. Mottram, O. O'Sullivan, A. Ozturk, D. Reedy, T. Raphael, and R. Allington. (2010). Teaching reading: What the evidence says. Leicester: United Kingdom Literacy Association. Retrieved from https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/UKLATeachingReading[1].pdf

Duff, F. J., Mengoni, S. E., Bailey, A. M., & Snowling, M. J. (2015). Validity and sensitivity of the phonics screening check: Implications for practice: PHONICS SCREENING CHECK.Journal of Research in Reading, 38(2), 109-123. doi:10.1111/1467-9817.12029

Duffy, G. G. & Anderson, L. M. (1982). Conceptions of reading project: Final report. The
    Institute for Research on Teaching, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East
    Lansing, MI 48824. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED218583

Educational Research. (1963). editorial introduction, Curriculum study and the freedom of
    the teacher. 5, 83-4.

Ehri, L. C. (1992). Development of Sight Word Reading: Phases and Findings. Retrieved
    from http://www.pitt.edu/~perfetti/PDF/Ehri.pdf

Ehri, L. C. (2005). Learning to read words: Theory, findings, and issues. Scientific Studies of
    Reading, 9(2), 167-188. doi:10.1207/s1532799xssr0902

Ehri, L. C., Nunes, S. R., Stahl, S. A., & Willows, D. M. (2001). Systematic phonics
    instruction helps students learn to read: Evidence from the national reading panel's meta-
    analysis. Review of Educational Research, 71(3), 393-447.
    doi:10.3102/00346543071003393

Ellis, A. K. (2005; 2014). Research on educational innovations (4th;4; ed.). Hoboken:
    Routledge Ltd. doi:10.4324/9781614420484

Ellis, S., & Moss, G. (2014). Ethics, education policy and research: the phonics question
    reconsidered. British Educational Research Journal, 40(2), 241-260. doi:10.1002/berj.3039

Englund, T. (1996). 'Are Professional Teachers a Good Thing?' In Goodson, I., &
    Hargreaves, A. (1996;2002). Teachers' professional lives (1st ed.). London; Washington;:
    Falmer Press. doi:10.4324/9780203453988

ERIC. (1999). Teaching Reading is Rocket Science. American federation of teachers. U.S.

Evetts, J. (2012). Professionalism in Turbulent Times: Changes, Challenges and
    Opportunities, Paper presented at the ProPel International Conference, 9–11th May in
    Stirling. Retrieved from
    https://www.google.co.uk/#safe=strict&q=Evetts%2C+J.+2012.+Professionalism+in+Tur

bulent+Times:+Changes%2C+Challenges+and+Opportunities%2C+Paper+presented+at+t

he+ProPel+International+Conference%2C+9%E2%80%9311th+May+in+Stirling.+

Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2012). Building and activating students' background

knowledge: It's what they already know that counts. Middle School Journal, 43(3), 22.

Fisher, R., Brooks, G., & Lewis, M. (2002). Raising standards in literacy. London:

Routledge/Falmer.

Flynn, N. (2007). What do effective teachers of literacy do? Subject knowledge and

pedagogical choices for literacy. Literacy, 41(3), 137-146. doi:10.1111/j.1467-

9345.2007.00452

Forum. (2016). Promoting 3 to 19 comprehensive educationEducation excellence

everywhere: Forum's response to the white paper. Retrieved from

https://forum3to19.org/2016/05/02/education-excellence-everywhere-forums-response-to-

the-white-paper/

Friedman, I. A. (1999). Teacher-perceived work autonomy: The concept and its

measurement. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 59(1), 58-76.

doi:10.1177/0013164499591005

Frith, U. (1985). Beneath the Surface of Developmental Dyslexia In K. Patterson, J. C.

Marshall & M. Coitheart (Eds.), Surface Dyslexia: Neuropsychological and Cognitive

Studies of Phonological Reading. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Frith, U., Wimmer, H., & Landerl, K. (1998). Differences in phonological recoding in

German- and English-speaking children. Scientific Studies of Reading, 2(1), 31-54.

doi:10.1207/s1532799xssr0201_2

Gewirtz, S. (2009; 2008). Changing teacher professionalism: International trends, challenges

and ways forward (1st ed.). London: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203887264

Giles, R. M., & Tunks, K. (2015; 2014). Teachers' thoughts on teaching reading: An
investigation of early childhood teachers' perceptions of literacy acquisition. Early
Childhood Education Journal, 43(6), 523-530. doi:10.1007/s10643-014-0672-3

Gillon, J. (2004). People power against climate change. Nature, 430(6995), 15-15.
doi:10.1038/430015a

Glazzard, J., & Palmer, J. (2015). Enriching Primary English. Northwich: Critical Publishing.
ISBN: 978-1-909682-49-

Glazzard, J., & Stokoe, J. (2011). Achieving outstanding on your teaching placement: Early
years and primary school-based training. London: SAGE.

Glazzard, J., & Stokoe, J. (2013). Teaching Systematic Synthetic Phonics and Early English.
Northwich: Critical Publishing.

Glazzard, j., Denby, N., & Price, J. (2014). Learning to teach (1st ed.). Maidenhead: Open
University Press/McGraw-Hill Education.

Goldstein, H. (2004). International comparisons of student attainment: Some issues arising
from the PISA study. Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 11(3), 319-
330. doi:10.1080/0969594042000304618

Goodacre, E. J. (1971). Children and learning to read. London: Routledge and K. Paul.

Goodman, K. S. (1967). Reading: the Psycholinguistic Guessing Game. Journal of the
reading specialist. Retrieved from http://www.uel.br/pessoal/sreis/pages/arquivos

Goodman, K. S. (1982). Language and literacy: Vol.1, process, theory, research. the selected
writings of kenneth S. goodman. Boston;London;: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Goodson, I., & Hargreaves, A. (1996-2002). Teachers' professional lives (1st ed.).
London;Washington;: Falmer Press. doi:10.4324/9780203453988

Goouch, K., & Lambirth, A. (2007;2008;). Understanding phonics and the teaching of
reading: Critical perspectives. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Goswami, U. (2005). Synthetic phonics and learning to read: A cross-language perspective. Educational Psychology in Practice, 21(4), 273-282. doi:10.1080/02667360500344823

Goswami, U. (2006). Learning to read across languages: the role of phonics and synthetic phonics in Goouch, K., & Lambirth, A. (2007;2008;). Understanding phonics and the teaching of reading: Critical perspectives. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Goswami, U. and Bryant, P. (2007). Children's Cognitive Development and Learning, The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys, 2 (1a), Cambridge: University of Cambridge Faculty of Education.

Goswami, U. and Bryant, P. (2010). Children's Cognitive Development and Learning, in Alexander, R. (ed) The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys. Abingdon: Routledge.

Goswami, U., Gombert, J. E., & de Barrera, L. F. (1998). Children's orthographic representations and linguistic transparency: Nonsense word reading in English, French, and Spanish. Applied Psycholinguistics, 19(1), 19-52. doi:10.1017/S0142716400010560

Gough, P B., & Tunmer, W E. (1986) Decoding, Reading and Reading Disability, Remedial Special Education, 7; 6-10.

Gove, M. (2011). Education for Economic Success. Education World Forum conference presentation, 11 January. Retrieved from http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0072274/michael-gove-to-theeducation-world-forum

Graaff, S., Bosman, A. M. T., Hasselman, F., & Verhoeven, L. (2009). Benefits of systematic phonics instruction. Scientific Studies of Reading, 13(4), 318-333. doi:10.1080/10888430903001308

Graham, J., & Kelly, A. (2008). Reading under control: Teaching reading in the primary school (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Grenville-Cleave, B., & Boniwell, I. (2012). Surviving or thriving? do teachers have lower

    perceived control and well-being than other professions? Management in Education,

    26(1), 3-5.

Grosemans, I., Boon, A., Verclairen, C., Dochy, F., & Kyndt, E. (2015). Informal learning of

    primary school teachers: Considering the role of teaching experience and school culture.

    Teaching and Teacher Education, 47, 151-161. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2014.12.011

Guba, E. G. (1990) The Paradigm dialog. Social Sciences, Sage Publications.

Guskey, T. R. (1986). Staff development and the process of teacher change. Educational

    Researcher, 15(5), 5-12. doi:10.2307/1174780

Hall, (2007). To codify pedagogy or enrich learning? A Wengerian perspective on early

    literacy policy in England. In Goouch, K & Lambirth, A. Understanding phonics and the

    teaching of reading: Critical perspectives. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Hall, K. (2006) How Children Learn to Read and How Phonics Helps. In Lewis & Ellis

    (Eds.) Phonics Practice, Research and Policy. (pp. 9-22) London: Sage.

Hall, R. H. (1975). Occupations and the social structure (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs;

    London: Prentice-Hall.

Hallgarten, J., & Johnson, M. (2001). The future of the teaching profession. Management in

    Education, 15(3), 18-20. doi:10.1177/089202060101500030901

Hempenstall, K. (1997). The whole language-phonics controversy: An historical perspective.

    Educational Psychology, 17(4), 399-418. doi:10.1080/0144341970170403

Hennink, M., Inge, H., & Ajay, B. (2011). Qualitative Research Methods. Sage.

Hess, F. M., & Fennell, M. (2015). Point-counterpoint: Teacher professionalism. Kappa Delta

    Pi Record, 51(4), 159. doi:10.1080/00228958.2015.1089618

Hofkins, D. (2003). Reading the riot act to both sides in phonic dispute. Times Educational

    Supplement. Retrieved from http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=375444.

House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, (2005). Teaching Children to Read: Eighth Report of Session 2004-2005. Report together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence. London: The Stationary Office Limited.

Hoyle, E. (1980). 'Professionalism and deprofessionalism in education', in Hoyle, E., & Megarry, J. (1980). World yearbook of education: 1980, professional development of teachers. London: Kogan Page.

Hoyle, E., & John, P. D. (1995). Professional knowledge and professional practice. London: Cassell. http://library.hud.ac.uk/summon

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/elizabeth-truss-speaks-on-the-national-curriculum-to-the-fellowship-commission.

Humphreys, M., & Hyland, T. (2002). Theory, practice and performance in teaching: Professionalism, intuition, and jazz. Educational Studies, 28(1), 5-15. doi:10.1080/03055690120090343

Hutchings, M. (2015). Exam factories? The impact of accountability measures on children and young people. NUT. Retrieved from https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/exam-factories.pdf

Ingersoll, R.M., Alsalam, N., Bobbitt, S., & Quinn, P.(1997). Teacher professionalization and teacher commitment: A multilevel analysis, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics.

International Reading Association. (2000). Teaching all Children to Read: The Roles of the Reading Specialist A Position Statement of the International Reading Association. Retrieved from https://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/reading-specialist-position-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=6

Jarvis, P. (1983). Professional education. London: Croom Helm.

Johnston, R. S., & Watson, J. E. (2004). Accelerating the development of reading, spelling and phonemic awareness skills in initial readers. Reading and Writing, 17(4), 327-357. doi:10.1023/B:READ.0000032666.66359.62

Johnston, R. S., McGeown, S., & Watson, J. E. (2012;2011;). Long-term effects of synthetic versus analytic phonics teaching on the reading and spelling ability of 10 year old boys and girls. Reading and Writing, 25(6), 1365-1384. doi:10.1007/s11145-011-9323-x

Jolliffe, W., Waugh, D., & Carss, A. (2012). Teaching systematic synthetic phonics in primary schools. Los Angeles, [Calif.];London;: SAGE/Learning Matters. Retrieved from http://library.hud.ac.uk/summon

Kim, M.S. (2011). Play, drawing and writing: A case study of Korean-Canadian young children. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 19(4), 483-500.

Kolsaker, A. (2008). Academic professionalism in the managerialist era: A study of English universities. Studies in Higher Education, 33(5), 513-525. doi:10.1080/03075070802372885

Kvale, S., (1996). Interviews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Lawn, M. (1990). From responsibility to competency: A new context for curriculum studies in England and Wales. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 22(4), 388-392. doi:10.1080/0022027900220409

Lawson, T. (2004). Teacher autonomy: Power or control? Education 3-13, 32(3), 3-18. doi:10.1080/03004270485200261

Lawton, D. (1980). The Politics of the School Curriculum. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Lewis, M., & Ellis, S. (2006). Phonics: Practice, research and policy. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

Lockwood, M. (2012). Attitudes to Reading in English Primary Schools. English in

Education, 46(3), 228-246. doi:10.1111/j.1754-8845.2012.01132.x

MacBeath, J. (2012). Future of Teaching Profession, Brussels: Education International

Research Institute.

McKeon, F. (2004). Teacher autonomy and subject knowledge. International journal of

Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education, 32 (3), 32-37.

McMahon, R., Richmond, M., & Reeves-Kazelskis, C. (1998). Relationships between kinder

garten teachers' perceptions of literacy acquisition and children's literacy involvement and

classroom materials. Journal of Educational Research, 91(3), 173–182.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach. San

Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Miller & Les Back. (2012). In Baker, S. E., Edwards, R. (2012). How many qualitative

interviews is enough? Expert voices and early career reflections on sampling and cases in

qualitative research National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper, Retrieved from

http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273/4/how_many_interviews.pdf

Miller, L., &Paige-Smith, A. (2004). Practitioner's beliefs and children's experiences of

literacy in four early years: settings. Early Years: An International Journal of Research and

Development, 24(2), 121-133.

Miller, R. L., & Brewer, J. D. (Eds.) (2003). The A-Z of social research. London: Sage.

Moats, L. C., & Foorman, B. R. (2003). Measuring teachers' content knowledge of language

and reading. Annals of Dyslexia, 53(1), 23-45. doi:10.1007/s11881-003-0003-7

Morris, J. (1984). Phonics 44 for initial literacy in English. Reading,18 (1).

DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9345.1984.tb00784.x

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). Report of the National

Reading Panel. Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the

Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its implications for Reading Instruction:

Reports of the Subgroups.

National Literacy Trust. (2012). Literacy guide for primary schools 2102-2013. Retrieved

from

http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0001/4461/The_Literacy_Guide_for_Primary_Scho

ols_2012-13_EXTRACT.pdf.

National Reading Panel. (2000). Teaching children to read: An evidence based assessment of

the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.

Bethesda, MD: National Reading Panel, National Institute of Child Health and Human

Development.

National Union of Teachers. (2012). Five years old is too young to fail! Year one phonics

screening check report. Retrieved from www.teachers.org.uk/

National Union of Teachers. (2013). The NUT'S response to the national curriculum

consultation. Retrieved from: www.teachers.org.uk/

NELP. (2008). Developing Early Literacy Report of the National early literacy panel.

Retrieved from https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/NELPReport09.pdf

Noordegraaf, M. (2007). From "pure" to "hybrid" professionalism: Present-day

professionalism in ambiguous public domains. Administration & Society, 39(6), 761-785.

doi:10.1177/0095399707304434

OECD. (2012). Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results from PISA.

Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm.

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). (2003-2004). The Annual report of Her Majesty's

Chief Inspector of Schools. Retrieved from

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). (2010). Moving English Forward: Action to Raise

Standards in English. London: Ofsted.

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). (2012; 2013). Ofsted Annual Report 2012/13:

schools report. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-

annual-report-201213-schools-report

Pearson, L. C., & Hall, B. W. (1993). Initial construct validation of the teaching autonomy

scale. The Journal of Educational Research, 86(3), 172-178.

doi:10.1080/00220671.1993.9941155

Pearson, L. Carolyn & Moomaw, William. (2005). The Relationship between Teacher

Autonomy and Stress, Work Satisfaction, Empowerment, and Professionalism.

Educational Research Quarterly, 29(3), 38-54

Pikulski, J. J., & Chard, D. J. (2005). Fluency: Bridge between decoding and reading

comprehension. The Reading Teacher, 58(6), 510-519. doi:10.1598/RT.58.6.2

PIRLS. (2011). International Results in Reading. Executive Summary. Boston: TIMSS and

PIRLS International Study Centre. Retrieved from timssandpirls.bc.edu/

Porter, A. C. (1989). External standards and good teaching: The pros and cons of telling

teachers what to do. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 11(4), 343-356.

doi:10.2307/1163988

Poulson, L., Avramidis, E., Fox, R., Medwell, J., & Wray, D. (2001). The theoretical beliefs

of effective teachers of literacy in primary schools: An exploratory study of orientations to

reading and writing. Research Papers in Education, 16(3), 271-292.

doi:10.1080/02671520126827

Punch, K. F. (2009). Introduction to research methods in Education. Sage.

Purcell-Gates, V. 2002. The irrelevancy – and danger – of the 'simple view' of reading to meaningful standards. In Raising standards in literacy, ed. R. Fisher, G. Brooks, and M. Lewis, 105–15. London: Routledge Falmer

Reading Reform Foundation. (2006). A RESPONSE BY THE READING REFORM FOUNDATION TO JIM ROSE S FINAL REPORT: INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE TEACHING OF EARLY. Retrieved from http://www.rrf.org.uk/pdf/RoseFinalReportMar06.pdf

Riley, J. (1999). Teaching Reading at Key Stage 1 and Before. Nelson Thornes Ltd.

Rose, j. (2006). Independent Review in the Teaching of Early Reading: Final Report. Nottingham. DfES. Retrieved from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/0201-2006PDF-EN-01.pdf.

Sainsbury, M., & Schagen, I. (2004). Attitudes to reading at ages nine and eleven. Journal of Research in Reading, 27(4), 373-386. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9817.2004.00240.x

Sean, C. (2013). Pisa tests: UK stagnates as Shanghai tops league table. BBC News education correspondent. Education & Family. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-251879977

Silverman, D. (2010). Doing qualitative research. (3rd ed). London: Sage.

Simons,H. (2009). Case study research in practice. Sage.

Siokt, W.T., & Fletcher, P. (2001). The role of phonological awareness and visual-othrographic skills in Chinese reading acquisition. Developmental Psychology, 37 (6), 886-899.

Smith, F. (1971). Understanding reading: A psycholinguistic analysis of reading and learning to read. New York; London; Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Stake, R. E., (1995). The art of case study research. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Stanovich, K. and Stanovich, P. (1995). How Research might inform the debate about early reading acquisition. Journal of Research in Reading, 18(2), 87-105. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9817.1995.tb00075.x

Stuart, M., & Coltheart, M. (1988). Does reading develop in a sequence of stages? Cognition, 30(2), 139-181. doi:10.1016/0010-0277(88)90038-8

Stuart, M., Stainthorp, R., & Snowling, M. (2008). Literacy as a complex activity: Deconstructing the simple view of reading. Literacy, 42(2), 59-66. doi:10.1111/j.1741-4369.2008.00490.x

Sweeney, J. (1994). New paradigms in teacher evaluation: The SBESD model. Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education, 8(3), 223-237. doi:10.1007/BF00973722

Torgerson, C.J., Brooks, G., & Hall, G. (2006). A systematic review of the research literature on the use of systematic phonics in the teaching of reading and spelling. London: Department for Education and Skills Publications.

Twist, L., Schagan, I., & Hodgson, C. (2007). Readers and Reading: The National Report for England. PIRLS, Slough: NfER. Retrieved from https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/PRN01/

UKLA. (2010) Teaching Reading: what the evidence says. Retrieved from https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/UKLATeachingReading[1].pdf

UKLA. (2012). UKLA Analysis of Schools' response to the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. Retrieved from https://www.teachers.org.uk/

Walford, G. (2001). Doing qualitative educational research: a personal guide to the research process. London: Continuum.

Watts, Z., & Gardner, P. (2012; 2013). Is systematic synthetic phonics enough? examining the benefit of intensive teaching of high frequency words (HFW) in a year one class. Education 3-13, 41(1), 1-10. doi:10.1080/03004279.2012.710105

Webb, P. T. (2002). Teacher power: The exercise of professional autonomy in an era of strict accountability. Teacher Development, 6(1), 47-62. doi:10.1080/13664530200200156

Webb, R., Vulliamy, G., Hämäläinen, S., Sarja, A., Kimonen, E., & Nevalainen, R. (2004). A comparative analysis of primary teacher professionalism in England and Finland. Comparative Education, 40(1), 83-107. doi:10.1080/0305006042000184890

White, T. G. (2005). Effects of systematic and strategic analogy-based phonics on grade 2 students' word reading and reading comprehension. Reading Research Quarterly, 40(2), 234-255. doi:10.1598/RRQ.40.2.5

Whitty, G. (2000). Teacher professionalism in new times. Journal of in-Service Education, 26(2), 281-295. doi:10.1080/13674580000200121

Wimmer, H., & Goswami, U. (1994). The influence of orthographic consistency on reading development: Word recognition in English and German children. Cognition, 51(1), 91-103. doi:10.1016/0010-0277(94)90010-8

Wise, B., Olson R. K., & Treiman R. (1990) Sub syllabic units in computerized reading instruction: onset-rime vs. post vowel segmentation. 49(1), 1-19.

Wolfe, S. C. (2015). Talking policy into practice: Probing the debates around the effective teaching of early reading. Education 3-13, 43(5), 498-513. doi:10.1080/03004279.2013.828765

Wray, D., & Medwell, J. (1994). Teaching primary English: The state of the art. New York; London: Routledge.

Wray, D., & Medwell, J. (2002). What do effective teachers of literacy know, believe and do?

In Fisher, R., Brooks, G., & Lewis, M. (2002). Raising standards in literacy. London:

Routledge/Falmer.

Wyse, D. (2000). Phonics-the whole story? A critical review of empirical evidence.

Educational Studies, 26(3), 355-364. doi:10.1080/03055690050137150

Wyse, D., & Goswami, U. (2008). Synthetic phonics and the teaching of reading. British

Educational Research Journal, 34(6), 691-710. doi:10.1080/01411920802268912

Wyse, D., & Styles, M. (2007). Synthetic phonics and the teaching of reading: The debate

surrounding England's 'Rose report'. Literacy, 41(1), 35-42. doi:10.1111/j.1467-

9345.2007.00455.x

Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: design and methods. (4th ed). Thousand Oaks,

California: Sage.

Ziegler, J. C., & Goswami, U. (2005). Reading acquisition, developmental dyslexia, and

skilled reading across languages: A psycholinguistic grain size theory. Psychological

Bulletin, 131(1), 3-29. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.131.1.3